

Analysis Room by Ilias Kourkounakis

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MATCH OVERVIEW**KASPAROV-
KRAMNIK**

by Ilias Kourkounakis

After the struggle is over, it is appropriate to ask certain critical questions and reach some conclusions about the whole encounter. Did the best man win? Why and how? Is this the dawn of a new era in Chess? Is it the end of Kasparov?

To begin with, there is no doubt that Kramnik won fair and square. He simply played better than the ex-World Champion and dominated the match right from the start. He won only two games, but he was very close to winning at least two more and managed not to lose even one! This is a magnificent accomplishment, especially given that Kasparov had White 8 times in the 15 games that were necessary to decide the title. Kasparov has been one of the most fearsome and winningest players of all time, while Kramnik one of the most solid. This time the irresistible force gave way to the immovable object -simply because it moved towards the direction of the force!

Initially, it was neutralisation of Kasparov's Whites that played the most important role in conquering the throne. The ex-Champion is famous for his ferocious attacks, but Kramnik would have none of it. He had detected a relative weakness in Kasparov's play without Queens and when the pawn structure is stable enough to discourage significant pawn breaks. Kramnik correctly decided to play variations that limited his opponent's creativity and thus undermined his confidence.

From this it might seem that the most crucial aspect of the match was opening preparation. However, as the match progressed it became clear that much more important was the energy level of both players and their relative ability in the endgame. In particular, Kasparov failed to summon enough reserves in two critical points of the match, namely Games 7 and 13, when he agreed in unprecedented quick draws in 11 and 14 moves respectively (and with White at that)!

Equally important, and possibly affected by the above considerations, was Kasparov's inability to perform as usual in critical transitional phases. Several times he was unable to increase an advantage that normally would be enough for him to win or at least give his opponent much more difficult problems to solve, while in some instances he exposed himself to unnecessary danger. By steering the games away from positions that demanded primarily concrete calculations, Kramnik demonstrated that his positional judgement was at least equal and probably superior to Kasparov's.

One problem is that both players made serious mistakes in the endgame. This can be attributed partly to the lack of adjournments, especially if one compares the level of play to previous World Championship matches, but there is surely more to it. Most of modern chess emphasises opening research, with the result that top players lack study time and experience with unbalanced endgames. It seems to me that either player could have swung the match to his favour by playing the endgame at a slightly higher level.

Another problem of the whole encounter reminds me of the chess world's astonishment when Petrosian won the title. It seems impossible and even undesirable that somebody can reach the very top without

creating some positive values in chess. No significant novelties, no memorable attacks against the King, not even some strategic masterpiece and, of course, no great endings. I think Kramnik's best creative effort came in Game 6, when he imagined and brought about an amazing situation with Kasparov's pieces better centralised but unable to move: a middlegame zugzwang at the highest level! Unfortunately, he was unable to crown this magnificent effort with a simple application of schematic thinking, probably because time trouble and the prospect of a second win so early in the match clouded his thinking. Despite its mistakes, this was probably the only game in which both players fought almost to the limit of their powers -a real struggle!

Without wishing to diminish Kramnik's accomplishment, I believe this was a match both won by the Challenger and lost by the Champion. It was more of a sporting event than a creative clash, as both players have demonstrated in the past that they can play at a much higher level. Kramnik was the better prepared participant and also the most practical, but I sincerely hope there will be a rematch in 2002. Both Kasparov and the new World Champion have shown that they can be self critical and improve on previous performances, so I am eager to see them clash in Wijk aan Zee in January.

Meanwhile, it will not be so easy for them to adjust in their new roles, especially Kasparov. Adding an «ex» to his title should be psychologically very harsh, since he was groomed to be the best player in the world almost from infancy. As a matter of fact, the only people still around that are comfortable with the same «ex» are Smyslov and Spassky, the latter having been World Champion almost 30 years ago! Both Fischer and Karpov have shown great reluctance to accept that «their» title is no longer theirs, despite the fact that they no longer participate at the highest level -

how will Kasparov react? If I understand him well, we shall see more of him in great tournaments, presenting great opening novelties and springing fierce attacks against the very best before long.

Kramnik will need a good rest, let it sink in that his life dream has come true and ponder his new responsibilities to a world that greatly appreciates his enormous talent and abilities. He will need to adjust to a much more positive environment, but this will not be easier -just more pleasant. A thorny issue will be possible reconciliation of the title business with the mess that F.I.D.E. has created, a F.I.D.E. Kramnik was never at the same odds with as Kasparov is. Hopefully, he will not be distracted by chess politics from chess itself.

There is no doubt that a new era is beginning - the younger generation has finally arrived. It will not be an era without Kasparov, who is not ready to retire conclusively beaten, but one with another worthy Champion. The King is not dead, long live the King!



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Kasparov	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	0	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	xxxx	6.5
Kramnik	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2	xxxx	8.5

KASPAROV,G (2815) - KRAMNIK,V (2770) [C67] WCCwch London (1), 08.10.2000

[It is probably worth mentioning that the start of Game 1 was delayed by nearly 30 minutes. Half an hour before the 3pm start time the organisers were still laying carpet in the playing hall so the delay may have been due to that.]

1.e4

[As one might expect, Kasparov wishes to test his opponent's readiness to play the Russian Defence. At this stage of the match, it is more important to establish what will be the main Black openings by Kramnik for the duration of the event, in a way similar to the Anand match.]

1...e5

[No Sicilian Defence today, thank you! The challenger wisely refrains from his sharper variations in his first Black game.]

2.Nf3 Nc6

[This is rather a surprise. Kramnik declares his willingness to enter a variety of openings, such as the Scotch, the Ruy Lopez, or even the Evans Gambit.

Behind the moves, a rather subtle psychological battle is taking place. Each player makes a variety of propositions to his opponent and creates challenges that the other might accept or duck. This will set both teams working for future games in the contest, but some work will be necessarily useless. The question here is which team will manage to outfox their collective opponents in the long run.]

3.Bb5

[True to his principles, Kasparov chooses the "objectively best" move. Indirectly, he tells Kramnik that the match shall be played on heavy theoretical paths.]

3...Nf6

[But Kramnik refuses to oblige! The Berlin Variation is rather timid, but solid. The challenger effectively declares that he is satisfied with a draw in this first game and will press for the full point almost exclusively when he is White, at least in the first half of the match. In addition, he attempts to show that he is able to control the pace and thus show "the Boss" that he is not really "boss".]

4.O-O

[This is the main line, while after 4.d3 or; 4.Qe2 the conflict is likely to be slower. The center will remain closed for a long time and Kasparov's intended theoretical battle in the opening shall not take place.

The problem with the text is that it practically leads to a position without Qs, a feature probably dearer to Kramnik than to the World Champion.]

4...Nxe4

[Another option is 4...Bc5, when White may continue either with 5.Nxe5 or 5.c3 O-O 6.d4 Bb6. Both continuations lead to sharp play, which is evidently not in Kramnik's interest.]

5.d4

[The continuation 5.Re1 Nd6 6.Nxe5 Be7 had already been used in the first official World Championship Steinitz-Zukertort (4th game), that went on 7.Bd3 O-O 8.Qh5 f5 9.Nc3 Nxe5 10.Rxe5 g6 etc.]

5...Nd6

[This move was popularized by Lasker and Pillsbury, but of course 5...Be7 was also possible.]

6.Bxc6

[An interesting alternative is 6.dxe5 Nxb5 7.a4, regaining the piece while retaining the Qs on the board. Kasparov was probably unwilling to enter a more complicated side-variation without preparation.]

6...dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5

[Although 7...Ne4 is playable, White then gets to keep the Qs with 8.Qe2.]

8.Qxd8+

[While now the move 8.Qe2 allows Black to equalise by exchanging Ns. After 8...Nd4 9.Nxd4 Qxd4, Fischer played 10.Nc3 against Neikirch in the 1958 Portoroz Interzonal (no more effective is 10.Rd1 Bg4 11.Rxd4 Bxe2 12.Nc3 Bh5 13.Bg5 h6 14.Bh4 Bc5, essayed in the later encounter Janosevic-Minev, Maribor 1967), but after 10...Bg4 11.Qe3 Qxe3 12.Bxe3 Bb4 full equality was established.]

8...Kxd8



[This is one of the modern "tabiyas" in the Berlin Variation of the Ruy Lopez. Compared to the normal Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez (1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.d4 exd4 6.Qxd4 Qxd4 7.Nxd4), this position offers both sides some advantages and disadvantages. White possesses more space in the center and has deprived his opponent of the right to castle, but in return has conceded the B pair. In particular, it is important that White has relinquished his white-squared B at a point in which his remaining central pawn seems prematurely advanced to a black square.

Kasparov's most important problem is that his main advantage is the kingside pawn majority, which cannot advance easily. In addition, Black may exchange his black-squared B for a N and thus provoke an endgame with opposite-color Bs, with clear drawing tendencies.

Kramnik's difficulties stem not so much from any danger that his uncastled King may face (there aren't any right now), but from the fact that his Rs cannot be activated in obvious ways. One may be exchanged on the d-file, but this means his King will have to move over and block the other one for a long time to come.]

9.Nc3

[The game Arakhamia-Panno, Aruba 1992, was a clear indication how the opposite-color Bs may affect the progress of the game: 9.Rd1+ Ke8 10.Nc3 Be6 11.b3 Bb4 12.Bb2 Bxc3 13.Bxc3 Rd8 14.Ng5 c5 15.Rxd8+ Kxd8 16.Rd1+ Ke7 17.g4 (if White wants to make some progress, this advance is absolutely necessary, while any delay may allow Black to set his own queenside majority in motion with...a7-a5 etc.) 17...Nh4 18.h3 (better seems 18.Nxe6 fxe6 19.f4, although even in that case Black probably keeps

sufficient control over the white squares) 18...h5 19.f3 Ng6 20.Re1 hxg4 21.hxg4 Bd5 22.Bd2 Nf8 23.Kg2 Ne6. Now the Argentinian GM had nothing better than the exchange of Ns and a peaceful outcome, but he decided to fight for more and suffered a deserved setback: 24.Ne4 b6 25.f4 Rd8 26.Bc1 Nd4 27.c4 Nc2 28.Re2 Bc6 (this is even better than 28...Bxe4+ 29.Rxe4 Rd1 30.Be3 Nxe3+ 31.Rxe3 Rd2+ 32.Kf3 Rxa2 etc.) 29.Kf2 Nb4 30.Kf3 Rd4 31.a3 Nd3 32.Bd2 Nxe5+ 33.fxe5 Bxe4+ 34.Kf2 Bb1 35.Bg5+ Ke6 36.Kg3 Rd3+ 37.Re3 Rxe3+ 38.Bxe3 Ba2 39.b4 cxb4 40.axb4 Bxc4 41.Kf4 Bd3 42.Bd4 g6 43.Bb2 Kd5 44.Kg5 Bc4 45.Kf4 Be2 46.Bc3 c5 47.bxc5 Kxc5 48.g5 Kc4 49.Be1 b5 50.Ke3 Bg4 and 0-1.

It is worth noting that Kasparov refrains from either the R check or 9.Bg5+. The enemy King will have to move anyway, while it is far from clear whether the checking pieces are best placed on these specific squares. One interesting historical example of this line of play is Harmonist - Tarrasch, Germany 1889: 9.Bg5+ 9...Ke8 10.Nc3 h6 11.Bf4 Be6 12.Rad1 Rd8 13.Ne4 c5 14.Rxd8+ Kxd8 15.Rd1+ Kc8 16.h3 b6 17.Kf1 Be7 18.a3 Rd8 19.Rxd8+ Kxd8 20.c3 Bd5 21.Nfd2 Kd7 and Tarrasch eventually won by exploiting the long-term advantages of his position, without really worrying about his doubled Ps. Exchanging Rs freed the black King and allowed him to infiltrate via the white squares.]

9...Bd7

[A relatively new idea, preparing to evacuate the King towards the queenside. Another instance where the difference between the white and black squares made itself felt was the encounter Wang-Z.Polgar, Shanghai 1992: 9...Ke8 10.b3 a5 11.Bb2 Be6 12.Rfd1 Bb4 13.h3 Bxc3 14.Bxc3 c5 15.Ne1 (the Chinese player begins N manouvres that show she has trouble creating a long-term plan and lead only to a waste of time) 15...h5 16.Nf3 b6 17.Bd2 Bd5 18.Ne1 Bc6 19.c3 h4 20.Bf4 Ne7 21.Nc2 Ng6 22.Bd2 Ke7 23.f4 Ke6 (even the King plays an active role in the fight for the white squares, while his enemy counterpart is unable to play a similar role) 24.Rf1 Ne7 25.Ne3 Nf5 26.Nxf5 Kxf5 (opposite-color Bs do not guarantee a draw, as long as Rs remain on the board) 27.Rad1 Bb5 28.c4 Bc6 29.Rfe1 Ke6 (avoids the strategic threat 30.e6 fxe6 31.Bc3, when White assumes the initiative) 30.Bc3 Rhd8 31.Kf2 a4 32.b4 cxb4 33.Bxb4 a3 (an inspired pawn sacrifice that ensures R infiltration behind the enemy lines) 34.c5 b5 35.Rxd8 Rxd8 36.Bxa3 Ra8 37.Re3 Ra4 38.g3 b4 39.Bb2 Rxa2 40.Re2 hxg3+ 41.Kxg3 b3 42.Kg4 g6 43.Kg5 Bf3 44.Re3 Bd1 and 0-1. Not a very good game by White, but rather instructive in how small inaccuracies may result even to her losing the contest.

Kramnik's idea is to avoid exposure of his King on the e-file, where tactical tricks abound and annoying pressure may be applied. A typical instance occurred in the game Yudasin-Rogers, Manila 1990: 9...h6 10.Rd1+ Ke8 (as a matter of fact, the move order was 9.Rd1+ Ke8 10.Nc3 h6) 11.h3 Be7 12.Ne2 g5 13.b3 Be6 14.g4 Ng7 15.Ng3 c5 16.Ne4 Rd8 17.Ba3 Bd5 18.Nf6+ Bxf6 19.exf6 Ne6 20.Ne5 (now Black's loss of castling really means that the Rh8 cannot join the battle for many moves) 20...b6 21.c4 Bb7 22.Rxd8+ Nxd8 (the Australian GM tries to ease the pressure by exchanges, but it is much easier for White to bring new reinforcements) 23.Rd1 Nc6 24.Bb2 Nb8 25.Ng6 Rg8 (the King's precarious position is revealed in the variation

25...fxg6 26.f7+ and 27.Bxh8, as well as in the game continuation) 26.Ne7 Rh8 27.Be5 Nc6 28.Nxc6 Bxc6 29.Bxc7 Bd7 30.f3 h5 31.Kh2 hxg4 32.fxg4 Rh6 (even the endgame cannot solve the Black King's problems since the B remains pinned against 33.Rd8#) 33.Rd6 Rg6 34.Kg3 Rh6 35.a3 Rg6 36.b4 Rh6 37.b5 Rg6 38.a4 Rh6 39.Bb8 Be6 40.Bxa7 Rxf6 41.a5 and 1-0.]

10.b3

[The main disadvantage of Black's last move is that it leaves f7 relatively unprotected. One is tempted then to attack it with 10.Ng5 in order to force 10...Ke8 after all. The problem is that White then has no time for normal development, since after 11.b3 there comes 11...Nd4 etc. Since the Yudasin-Rogers game (among others) clearly showed the usefulness of the B on the long a1-h8 diagonal, Kasparov proceeds without attempting to muddy the waters -yet.

According to Internet reports, until now Kasparov had invested half an hour against only 5 minutes for Kramnik. Nevertheless, the quiet nature of the position means that he is not likely to miss this thinking time anytime soon. The challenger has achieved his primary aim, that is to avoid a full-scale theoretical battle, but still has to solve a few practical problems.; It is worth mentioning how the development of the white B serves a variety of goals: it guards the N against a possible attack...Bf8-b4 and a subsequent exchange that might cripple the queenside pawn structure, it creates the strategic threat e5-e6 at several points in time, it keeps the B out of the way of other white pieces and, in addition, the b-pawn guards the white square c4, sometimes supporting its fellow foot-soldier to advance there. The only drawback is that sometimes Black has the possibility of a pawn break...a7-a5-a4, but usually that is prevented by a2-a4.

There is no real danger for Black in the bishop's straightforward development to f4, even though in this case White's a1-rook finds itself on d1 one move earlier. For example, 10.Bf4 h6 11.Rad1 Kc8 12.h3 (or 12.Rd3 Be6 13.Rfd1 Be7 14.g4 Nh4) 12...Bb4 (also good is 12...Be6 13.g4 Ne7) 13.Ne4 Be6 and Black faces no serious problems.; Finally, Black need not worry about 10.Rd1 Kc8 11.Ng5, as the temporary retreat 11...Be8 will allow the subsequent eviction of the N with...h7-h6 while the B may go to c6 saving a tempo.]

10...h6

[Sooner or later, the g5 square must be covered against enemy invasion. After 10...Kc8 11.Ng5 Be6 12.Nxe6 fxe6 13.Ne4 Black should not feel very comfortable, although the previous note suggests that a retreat like 11...Be8 is not necessarily bad.]

11.Bb2 Kc8



12.h3

[At first glance a meaningless move, where 12.Rad1 seems much more purposeful. However, top grandmasters are distinguished by playing non-obvious moves in situations where others might make a quick decision. We are clearly in the transitional phase between the opening and the middlegame, which means that simple quantitative development will not do. Each move must be part of a long-term plan, with every piece aiming for its best placement in the least possible amount of time.

At the present moment, it is not at all evident that the d-file would be beneficial to White. Kasparov's plan is to advance his kingside pawn majority at some point and challenge with it crucial white squares. The move g2-g4 is indispensable, which means h2-h3 is useful as well. The Ra1 could join the effort by going to e1, providing useful support to the "candidate" passed pawn.]

12...b6

[Kramnik does not have an active plan, since his only advantage is the B pair. This can only show its power when the game opens up, therefore development and exchanges are in order. The Russian GM played this move very quickly, indicating that he was still following home preparation.]

13.Rad1

[This move puzzles me a lot, as it contradicts my earlier comment, which however, I am unwilling to retract.

Reports had it that Kasparov had used 54 minutes up to now, against only 12 by Kramnik, but this should not cause any unnecessary excitement. His problem is not to make 27 moves in 66 minutes, but to find some constructive moves in the first place.

It was worth considering 13.g4 Ne7 14.Kg2, bringing the King up to g3 in order to provide adequate support to the g4-pawn. Then 14...Nd5 should not be dangerous after 15.Ne2 and c2-c4.

In general, White should keep as many pieces as possible on the board, since Black lacks space -for example, both the N and the black-square B could use e7. Kasparov does not have any easy pawn breaks, which means

he must resort to piece manoeuvres and use his superior mobility.]

13...Ne7

[An excellent retreat, preventing White's best plan for a long time to come. Now it is not possible to play 14.g4, as then 14...h5 follows and the King is too far behind the g4 pawn.]

The official site of the match mentioned that 13...a5 was played in Shirov(2746)-Krasenkow(2702) earlier in the year, an encounter from the Polanica Zdroj traditional Rubinstein Memorial (4th round, August 20) previously unknown to me. I would definitely vote for Kramnik's move, as I do not believe queenside expansion should be such a high priority for Black - yet.

Just a little time later, I discovered in TWIC the rest of this important game (again there seems to have been a slight transposition in move order, that is 12.Rad1 a5 13.h3 b6): 14.a4 Bb4 15.Ne2 Re8 16.Nf4 g6 17.g4 Ng7 18.Rd3 (the tactical usefulness of a timely h2-h3 is that now White does not need to waste time defending the Pg4 and may create threats much faster once his challenge for the initiative gets under way) 18...Ne6 19.Nxe6 Bxe6 20.Nd4 Bd7 21.Ne2 Bd6 22.f4 f5 23.exd6 Rxe2 24.dxc7 Kxc7 25.Be5+ Kc8 26.Rfd1 Be6 27.Rd6 and 1-0 (after 27...Bd5 28.c4 the B is pinned against a R invasion to d8). Once again, the opposite-color Bs proved decisive for the attack with Rs on the board and an inactive R for the defending side.

It should be noted that 13...Be6 runs into 14.g4 Ne7 15.Nd4, when the usefulness of an early h2-h3 becomes apparent, while; 13...Be7 Ostos-Beliavsky, Caracas 1976, continued 14.Ne2 Rd8 (14...c5 and White could gain the advantage after 15.g4! (while in the game it was 15.Nf4?! g5 16.Nh5 c5 17.g4 Bc6! and Beliavsky captured the initiative.) 15...Nh4 16.Nxh4 Bxh4 17.e6! Bxe6 18.Bxg7. 15.Nf4 Bc6 16.Nd5 Kb7 17.c4 with a position not unlike that which occurred later on in Kasparov-Kramnik) and now, instead of 15.Nf4 g5 16.Nh5 c5 17.g4 Bc6, White could continue 15.g4 Nh4 16.Nxh4 Bxh4 17.e6! Bxe6 18.Bxg7 with a definite advantage.

Grandmaster Shipov, in his notes to the game on Kasparov's Internet site, correctly mentions that in general it is dangerous for Black to develop his bishop on e7, because White is then often able to engineer a successful breakthrough with e5-e6.]

14.Ne2

[Apparently Kasparov needed approximately 15 minutes for this move, an indication that he either has difficulties in forming a long-term plan or he still needs to adjust his ideas to Kramnik's novelty.]

14...Ng6

[14...c5 would be premature, as after 15.Nf4 Black might not be able to complete his development in a satisfactory way. A typical continuation then is 15...Ng6 16.e6 (much better than 16.Nxg6 fxg6 and...Bd7-e6, with a white-square blockade) 16...Bxe6 (Black cannot afford 16...Nxf4 17.exd7+ Kd8 18.Ne5) 17.Nxe6 fxe6 18.Rfe1 Nf4 (or 18...Bd6 19.Rxe6 Nf4 20.Re4 with the twin threats 21.Rxd6 and 21.Bxg7) 19.h4, when the simple push 20.g3

will create insurmountable problems.]

15.Ne1



[Kasparov retreats with attacking intentions, that is a massive advance of his kingside majority. Still, I think he should have provided for it better by using his King earlier rather than posting the R on the d-file. At least, he managed to force Kramnik to think seriously for the first time in the game. After making all of his previous moves almost instantly, the Challenger spent half an hour on this move. Perhaps he was surprised by Ne1, nevertheless he still remains with far more thinking time available than Kasparov.]

Another significant alternative was suggested by Shipov, that is 15.Ng3. The main idea is to transfer the N to h5, from where it attack the g-pawn. A possible continuation then is 15...c5 (after 15...h5 White can take advantage of the new weakening with 16.Ng5 Be8 17.f4 etc.) 16.Nh5 Bc6 17.Rfe1 Kb7 18.e6 Bxf3 19.gxf3 fxe6 20.Rxe6 Nh4 21.Kf1 and White apparently keeps a definite advantage.]

15...h5

[An excellent restraining response, without which Black could get into serious trouble. I trust my previous comments and the games mentioned earlier make clear how important is control of the square f5 in such positions. In addition, Kramnik manages to develop the Rh8 without moving at all his black-squared B.]

The immediate 15...c5 is riskier but apparently tenable. If White then attempts to wrest the initiative with 16.f4, Black still has the time to reply 16...Nh4 with the idea...h6-h5, e.g. 17.g3 (after 17.f5 Bxf5 {naturally not 17...Nxf5 18.Rxd7} 18.g3 Bxh3 19.gxh4 Bxf1 20.Kxf1 Be7 it is not at all clear that the minor pieces are worth more than R+2Ps in an open board) 17...Nf5 18.Kf2 c4 19.g4 Bc5+ 20.Nd4 Nxd4 21.Bxd4 Bxd4+ 22.Rxd4 cxb3 and the fight still rages on. Of course, Kramnik's choice avoids any unpleasant surprises in variations like the above.]

16.Nd3

[Kasparov has much the better piece development, but without an

appropriate pawn break it is practically impossible to make it tell. Despite the opinion of other human commentators (and some silicon ones as well), I believe White's potential is limited.]

16...c5

[A useful move that signals Black's intentions to expand on the black squares as well, even though it has the obvious defect of leaving d5 with less support than it deserves. The alternative 16...Be7 runs into 17.e6 Bxe6 18.Bxg7, e.g. 18...Rg8 19.Bb2 Nh4 20.Ndf4 and White's superior development provides him with much better chances once hand-to-hand combat begins.]

Shipov proposes 16...Kb7, arguing that Black runs no danger from 17.Nc5+ Bxc5 18.Rxd7, as then 18...Rae8 can be played, e.g. 19.Rxf7 Nxe5 20.Bxe5 (20.Rxg7 Nc4 is much worse) 20...Rxe5, when Black may even stand better.]

17.c4

[The idea...c5-c4 should be stopped once and for all. One typical variation in which it proves particularly dangerous is 17.Nef4 (admittedly not the best of moves) 17...Nxf4 18.Nxf4 a5 and White cannot prevent the further advance of this pawn with subsequent opening of the a-file with 19.a4, because of the simple reply 19...c4 etc.]

17...a5

[I am not so sure this advance is essential now. Black might want in the future to expell an enemy N from d5 with...c7-c6 without exposing his b-pawn.]

18.a4

[White, on the other hand, faces much less danger regarding his own Pb3, as he only has to take care against a manouvre of the type...Bd7-f5-c2.]

18...h4

[Kramnik wisely completes the process of immobilizing the enemy pawn majority before deciding about the best squares for his pieces: they have no offensive power, anyway.]

19.Nc3 Be6

[The correct diagonal for the B is the one that allows control of the critical square f5. By now, Kramnik was catching up with Kasparov on time.]

20.Nd5

[The N only looks threatening on this square. In reality it only blocks the d-file, which makes it inconsistent with White's previous play. Kasparov's idea was all along to reroute it towards f5 by moving it to the only reasonable square from which it can approach it, that is e3.]

20...Kb7

[At long last, the challenger is ready to activate a R.]

21.Ne3



21...Rh5

[The best move in the position, it completely halts Kasparov's only logical plan. If White does nothing, Kramnik may continue 22...Be7 and 23...Rd8 (impossible without the B development, because of the discovered attack after Nxc5+) or 22...Re8 and 23...Kc8.]

22.Bc3

[Leaving himself with only 12 minutes until the first time control, Kasparov admits that he has nothing. The only conceivable idea behind the B move is to redirect it towards the kingside and attack the semi-exposed Ph4 from e1, but this plan is easily thwarted.]

22...Re8 23.Rd2

[Frankly, I do not understand how this move fits in with the World Champion's previous one.]

23...Kc8 24.f4

[A small crisis is provoked, but it will soon be dissolved.]

24...Ne7 25.Nf2 Nf5

[The blockade has been firmly established and there is not much play in the position. In perhaps the most important moment of the game, Kramnik takes the opportunity to offer a draw.]

This should not pass unnoticed, because to offer Kasparov a draw with Black after only 25 moves indicates a position of strength. We must remember that in the previous match against Anand it was Kasparov who made all(!) the offers, thus indicating who controlled the proceedings. This time, from the very first game, the challenger screams that they stand on equal terms.]

Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2770) [D85] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (2), 10.10.2000

[In many ways, the first game in which Kramnik is White is more likely to define the match. Kasparov's has offered us several instances of match strategy at this level, while the challenger still hasn't made his mark.

Before the match, most experts suggested that Kramnik is likely to press more with White. I may add that this is not enough. I can easily picture Kramnik winning two games, but I do not believe such a small number is sufficient for an overall win (can one seriously expect Kasparov to score a full point only once?). This means that Kramnik should strive for at least 3 wins, a number that even Karpov found difficult to achieve in his better days after 16 games (not counting the aborted 1984-5 encounter, of course).

Kasparov will not just lose 3 games, they have to be won from him. We ought to keep in mind that Short and Anand could only force his resignation once in their matches, while it should be noted that in both cases the World Champion underestimated the danger. Having studied extensively the history of the World Title matches, I am inclined to say that the only way Kramnik may become the 14th in line is by creating something new in chess. What this is I do not know (otherwise I would be the first to introduce it or sell the concept to better athletes), but I feel he should do it with White.]

1.d4

[After his recent experiment against Leko, people started wondering... Is Kramnik capable of pulling a fast one on Kasparov and switch to 1.e4 in a way similar to Fischer switching away from it against Spassky? Maybe the challenger's summer choice was just a bluff? Or does he need to repeat it in his first White game in order to make it a double bluff?

Personally, I thought it unlikely that Kramnik could resort to half measures. Either he should stick to his usual guns with slight variations or he should adopt a completely new face until the match is practically decided. Sixteen games, eight White and eight Black, is a rather short distance for trying one-out experiments at an early stage.

Anand used the Scandinavian to good effect (it makes no difference that he lost) only when he thought there was no reasonable chance to fight back by normal means. Likewise, Kramnik cannot afford not to use his basic weapons at this stage.

Maybe he can keep a big surprise or two for the middle of the match, but he and Kasparov must decide on which openings they will fight the main battles right now.

After six games, both teams should know what they should concentrate on.]

1...Nf6

[Kasparov has also essayed a more traditional approach with 1...d5, when equality without risks was his primary aim. Here, however, he is probably interested to know Kramnik's main weapons right from the start of the match and prefers an asymmetrical approach. Without a doubt, he believes that his opening armoury is both better and wider, so that he will be able to adapt quickly to any surprises by his opponent. Besides, after his luckluster effort in the 1st game, he must show that he is ready for a full fight.]

2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5

[The Grunfeld Defence has been a favorite battleground in games between the same opponents. Therefore, a theoretical battle should be expected. Kasparov developed it as a primary weapon for his World Championship matches against Karpov in London/Leningrad 1986 and Seville 1987. This choice initially surprised most people, especially compared to his previous favourite King's Indian, but it gradually became clear that the Grunfeld fits in very well with Kasparov's style: asymmetrical and combative, it offers great scope for developing an initiative with Black, mainly because of the liquidity of the pawn structure.]

4.cxd5

[The Exchange Variation has always been Kramnik's basic choice against the Grunfeld. The challenger seemed satisfied to defuse the Champion's attacking intentions with Black, but he certainly is ready to fight with White.]

4...Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Nf3 c5



[The basic idea behind most asymmetrical openings is to allow White full occupation of the centre and attack it subsequently. If the central pawns do not have adequate piece support, they may prove vulnerable and then White will have to make some concessions. These in turn may be taken advantage of by Black, in order to acquire some kind of superiority and challenge for the whole point.

White, on the other hand, retains full mobility of his central pawns, as there is a choice between e4-e5 or d4-d5, according to circumstances.]

8.Be3

[In the last Grunfeld encounter between the same opponents, in Wijk aan Zee 2000, Kramnik tried 8.h3 and Kasparov had to fight very hard for the half point: 8...0-0 9.Be2 b5 10.Be3 Bb7 11.Qd3 cxd4 12.cxd4 Nd7 13.0-0 Nb6 14.Qb1 Na4 15.Qxb5 Nc3 16.Qxb7 Nxe2+ 17.Kh1 Nxd4 18.Rad1 e5 19.Nxe5 Bxe5 20.f4 Bg7 21.e5 Qb6 22.Qxb6 axb6 23.Bxd4 Rxa2 24.Bxb6 Re8 25.Bd8 Ra6 26.Bc7 Rae6 27.g4 g5 28.f5 Rc6 29.Rd7 Bxe5 30.Re1 f6 31.Bxe5 Rxe5 32.Rxe5 fxe5 33.Re7 h5 34.Kg2 hxg4 35.hxg4 Rc4 36.Kf3 Rf4+ 37.Kg3 e4 . At this point, the players finally agreed to a draw.]

10...Qa5 9.Qd2 Bg4

[An important alternative is 9...0-0 .]

10.Rb1



10...a6

[This move was apparently played for the first time by Ivancuk against Timman in 1992. The capture 10...Bxf3 is extremely risky: 11.gxf3 cxd4 12.cxd4 Qxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Nc6 (after 13...b6 14.Bb5+ or 14.Rc1 Black will have great trouble activating the Rs) 14.d5 0-0-0 15.Ba6 bxa6 (no better is 15...Na5 16.Rhc1+ Kb8 17.Rc5 and Black is deep trouble) 16.Rhc1 Rd6 17.Ke2 Kc7 18.Bc5 Kd7 19.Rb7+ (of course, not 19.Bxd6 Nd4+ and 20...Kxd6 which keeps Black in the game) 19...Kc8 (now, however, after 19...Kd8 20.Bxd6 Nd4+ 21.Kd2 exd6 22.Rcc7 the chances of survival are negligible) 20.Bxd6 Kxb7 21.dxc6+ Kb6 22.Bxe7 Rc8 23.Bc5+ Kb5 (immediately losing is 23...Kxc6 24.Bf8+) 24.Bxa7 Rxc6 (in effect resigning the game, but the position was technically won in any case) 25.a4+ and 1-0 in Rivas-Kir.Georgiev Plovdiv 1984.;

It is imperative for Black to prevent 11.Rb5 and 12.Rxc5, when all of the pressure on the White centre is relieved (aside from winning a pawn), since the imaginative variation 10...Nc6 11.Rb5 cxd4 12.Rxa5 dxe3 13.Qxe3 Nxa5 does not work. Black's delay of castling becomes very serious after 14.Bb5+ , otherwise the positional Q offer would be quite satisfactory.]

11.Rxb7

[This seems to be a novelty. The Timman-Ivanchuk encounter in Linares 1992 saw 11.Rb3 with an eventual draw after an interesting battle. The pawn capture is risky because it exposes the R, but it also adds pressure on e7 and may thus provoke the delay of Black's castling.]

11...Bxf3

[A typical reaction, counterattacking the White centre. I suspect Kramnik chose deliberately another variation in which Kasparov's apparent best choice is to exchange Qs.]

12.gxf3 Nc6 13.Bc4

[The challenger played this move quickly, which indicates that he had prepared everything beforehand. The a2-g8 diagonal is a favourite destination of the white-squared B in this variation, especially when pressure on f7 can be combined with other pieces. On the other hand, the B often becomes the target of enemy pieces on c4, either a R on the c-file or the N by ...Nc6-a5 or ...Nc6-e5 at an appropriate moment.]

13...0-0 14.0-0 cxd4

[Hereabouts, Kasparov was spending a lot of time. He was probably searching for a way to keep active counterplay without entering the endgame.]

15.cxd4



15...Bxd4

[This move aims to take advantage of the exposed position of the enemy R, by attacking it at the right moment with the N.

The "easy" choice is 15...Qxd2 16.Bxd2 (it is important that the square a5 remains under White's control) 16...Nxd4 17.Kg2 e6 , leading to a rather typical Grunfeld ending. Although material is equal in the formal sense, things are far from easy. White's pawn weaknesses are negligible, while the pair of Bs may prove valuable with so many open lines. White already has one active R, while the strong Nd4 blocks the activity of Black's B.

Overall, I think Kramnik wishes to put psychological pressure on Kasparov, by demonstrating he can easily get better endgames than the World Champion with White. Even if Kasparov manages to draw such a position, he must suffer much more than Kramnik in the first game.

It is worth noting that in this kind of ending once again Kasparov would lack any meaningful pawn breaks, while tactical complications are unlikely to dominate the proceedings. Could this be part of a deep match strategy by Kramnik? And can Kasparov successfully avoid it?];

Another way to keep tension is 15...Qh5 , combining central pressure with kingside threats (in particular, the idea of a perpetual check from g4 and f3 is not uncommon in this type of position).

After 16.Kg2 the variation 16...Nxd4 (worse is 16...Rfd8 17.d5 Ne5 18.Be2; , while after 16...Bxd4 17.Bxd4 Rad8 18.Bd5 Nxd4 19.Qxd4 e6 the same position occurs with transposition of moves) 17.Bxd4 Rad8 18.Bd5 Bxd4 19.Qxd4 e6 leads to some complications, but White avoids them easily and obtains a superior position with A) the initially attractive 20.Qf6 exd5 21.e5 (a typical variation with the perpetual check mentioned earlier is 21.Rxf7 Rxf7 22.Qxd8+ Kg7 23.Qxd5 Qxf3+ 24.Kg1 Qg4+; , while White should avoid traps like 21.Rd1 dxe4 22.Rxd8 Qxf3+ 23.Qxf3 exf3+ 24.Kxf3 Rxd8 etc.) with the threat 22.e6 is easily repulsed by 21...Rde8 ; B) 20.Rd1 20...exd5 21.exd5 . This is definitely not the kind of position Kasparov desires, only to avoid an inferior endgame...]

16.Bd5

[Obviously not 16.Qxa5 Nxa5 when an equal ending likely occurs, but it makes sense to attack the piece that protects two fellow ones. Since Kramnik decides to enter the complications, an interesting question is whether he is still following home analysis.

Any extra thinking time that was invested in this choice may contain a subtle psychological bluff, luring Kasparov to believe that he has managed to get out of his opponent's plans. Kramnik can afford to do that, because he already has a considerable advantage on the clock.]

16...Bc3 17.Qc1



[By far the best retreat, as the Q keeps control of her enemy counterpart's flight square a3 and at the same time prepares to attack the kingside via the c1-h6 diagonal. In particular, she may move to f4 in order to add pressure on f7, a theme quite likely to persist well into the endgame now.

Reportedly Kramnik thought for about 40 minutes on this choice, indicating that he is on his own by now. Nevertheless, I find it hard to believe that he missed 15...Bxd4 in his preparations, as it is a move most computer programs are likely to examine and Kasparov's team would surely discover it if they had even scratched the surface of the variation.]

17...Nd4

[An important alternative at this point is 17...Rac8 , establishing an indirect connection between the R and the White Q. A likely continuation then would be 18.Bb6 A) 18...Nd4 is proved wrong after 19.Bxa5 Ne2+ 20.Kg2 Nxc1 21.Rxc1 (if White does not like the following variation, another promising choice is 21.Bxc3 Rxc3 22.Rxe7) 21...Bxa5 22.Rxc8 Rxc8 23.Rxe7 Rc7 (or 23...Rf8 24.Ra7 etc,) 24.Re8+ (not 24.Bxf7+ , when Black should draw the opposite-color B ending 24...Kg7 25.Rxc7 Bxc7) 24...Kg7 25.Ra8 and the win of a second pawn offers White substantial chances; B) 18...Qb4 19.a3 Qb2 20.Qxb2 Bxb2 21.Bc5 (21.Rb1 Bxa3 22.Ra1 is unpromising) 21...Bf6 (not 21...Bd4 22.Bxd4 Nxd4 23.Rxe7 Nxf3+ 24.Kg2 with a considerable advantage, e.g. 24...Nd2 25.Rd1 Rc2 26.Ra7) 22.Bxc6 Rxc6 23.Bxe7 Bxe7 24.Rxe7 Rc3 25.Kg2 Rxa3 26.Rb1 and the plan of doubling Rs on the 7th rank in conjunction with the advance of the e-pawn may become quite annoying for Black.]

18.Bxd4

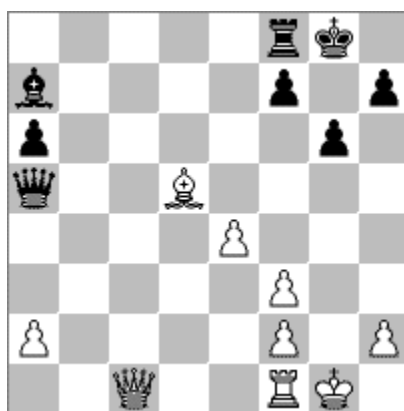
[The Q could "triangulate" with 18.Qd1 in order to take advantage of the exposed N, but then Black would continue 18...e6 (not 18...e5 19.Bh6) 19.Bxd4 (19.Bc4 Rfd8

would be quite pointless) A) worse is 19...Bxd4 20.Qxd4 Rad8 21.Rd1 (the attempt 21.Qf6 would lead to a sub-variation similar to one mentioned in the note after 15th move after 21...exd5 22.e5 Rde8 , also with satisfactory play for Black) 21...exd5 22.exd5 and the passed d-pawn offers a persistent pull; B) 19...exd5 20.Bxc3 (after 20.exd5 Qxd5 the Rb7 is hanging) 20...Qxc3 21.exd5 (obviously not 21.Qxd5 Qxf3; while nothing much is achieved by 21.Rb3 Qa5 either) 21...Rad8 22.Ra7 (also useless are 22.d6 Qc6; and 22.Rb3 Qa5) 22...Qc5 23.Rxa6 Rxd5 and White can only lose this position with major pieces and an exposed King.]

18...Bxd4 19.Rxe7 Ra7

[Practically forced, otherwise the pressure against f7 could soon become unbearable.]

20.Rxa7 Bxa7



[After massive exchanges, the game has entered a new stage, in which White has a distinct superiority. Whether intentionally or not, Kramnik has achieved the kind of endgame he probably wants at this stage of the match: no danger with good chances of pressing on for many moves.

As most annotators never tire to repeat in such positions, the distinguishing feature of the battle to come is the opposite-color Bs. Anything one attacks cannot be defended by the other, therefore the inferior side should take its chances in the endgame. By retaining at least a pair of major pieces, however, Kramnik may try to capitalize on his extra pawn.]

21.f4

[A very useful idea. Before activating Q and R, White places some pawns on black squares, in order to hinder the activity of the enemy B. This strategic approach was first established by Capablanca, with the express aim to control space economically: the white B and Ps must perform complementary functions rather than repetitious ones.

Much worse would be 21.Qg5 , since after 21...Qb6 (worse is 21...Qd8 , when a typical transition to the endgame would be 22.Qxd8 Rxd8 23.Rc1 Rd7 24.Rc6 a5 25.Ra6 etc.; , or 21...Bb8 22.Rc1) the R becomes tied down to the defence of f2 and nothing comes out of 22.f4 Kg7 etc.]

21...Qd8 22.Qc3



[Not, of course, 22.Qc6 Qh4 , since the Q must guard the kingside. White's primary attacking piece shall be the R, an almost perfectly designed companion to the B for combining pressure on a single point.]

22...Bb8

[I am not sure this is the best move. I understand why Kasparov would not like to choose 22...Qh4 , since after 23.Qg3 (White must be extra careful, because in the variation 23.Qf3 Rc8 the roles of attacker and defender may be easily reversed) 23...Qxg3+ 24.hxg3 Rb8 (after 24...Rc8 White gets the extra option 25.Rb1 Rc2 26.Rb7 Bxf2+ 27.Kg2 , but then Black obtains more chances for a draw after 27...Be1+ 28.Kh3 Rc3 29.Rxf7 Rxg3+ 30.Kh2 Kh8 31.e5 Re3 32.e6 Bb4 , therefore 27.Kh1 is indicated again) 25.Rc1 Rb2 26.Rc7 Bxf2+ 27.Kh1 (better than 27.Kf1 Bxg3 28.Rxf7 Kh8) 27...Bxg3 28.Rxf7 Kh8 29.e5 Re2 30.e6 Bh4 31.Bc4 he faces an uphill battle.;

However, it seems to me that with 22...Qb6 Black would be still fully in the game.]

23.Qf3

[Now Kramnik's R is certain to be activated before his opponent's.]

23...Qh4 24.e5 g5

[Absolutely necessary. If Kasparov hesitates even slightly, the enemy R will reach b7 with alarming speed and all of White's pieces will be better than their counterparts.]

25.Re1

[Nothing much is achieved after 25.fxg5 Qxg5+ (superior to 25...Bxe5 26.Qg2 , planning Rf1-e1-e4 and possibly g5-g6) 26.Kh1 Qxe5 27.Rg1+ Kh8 28.Qg2 , when neither side can make any serious progress. Kramnik must fight for the initiative, even if it means exchanging the Qs: one should not forget that he has an extra P, even if it is doubled, as it may be traded in for a healthier one.]

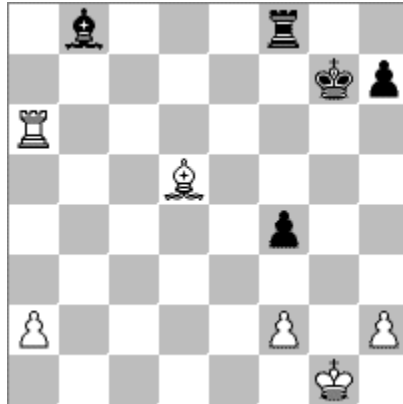
25...Qxf4

[Kasparov decides to take his chances in the endgame, since 25...gxf4 looks quite dangerous after 26.e6 (much worse is 26.Kh1 Kh8; , while 26.Re4 Kh8 27.Rxf4 Qg5+ may be tenable for Black) 26...fxe6 27.Rxe6 Kh8 28.Rxa6 etc.]

26.Qxf4 gxf4 27.e6

[Of course, White must press on. In all other cases, Black will play 27...Re8 and achieve complete equality.]

27...fxe6 28.Rxe6 Kg7 29.Rxa6



[The game has entered a new stage, in which Kasparov is undoubtedly suffering. A pure B ending would be easily drawn, but the presence of the Rs allows the superior side to combine the advance of the free pawn with threats on the opposite side of the board. In particular, White will try to attack the h-pawn, which means the defending side should try to form a barrier with the R along a horizontal line. Because, however, its own f-pawn restricts considerably the mobility of the black B, Black should probably lose in the long run.]

29...Rf5 30.Be4 Re5 31.f3

[The B-P combination guarantees control of the centre, so the white King will soon be able to advance.]

31...Re7

[This retreat could be the beginning of a "zoning" defence on the 7th rank, but this plan is ultimately doomed to failure. White will advance the a-pawn together with the King and then either sacrifice the R for the B or attack something on the other side. The next few moves indicate that Kasparov plays without a plan. Possibly he was under serious time pressure, but the position is hopeless anyway.]

32.a4 Ra7 33.Rb6 Be5 34.Rb4 Rd7

[If Black sits tight, Kramnik will advance the King unhindered.]

35.Kg2 Rd2+ 36.Kh3 h5 37.Rb5 Kf6 38.a5 Ra2 39.Rb6+ Ke7

[Incredible! Kasparov blunders a whole piece, admittedly in a cheerless position.

Even time trouble cannot account for this. The only way to keep fighting was 39...Kg7, although there should be no doubt about the outcome after 40.a6. A sample line is 40...Bd4 41.Rg6+ Kh8 (or 41...Kf7 42.Rd6 Be5 43.Bd5+ winning the R) 42.Rd6 Be3 43.Kh4 Rxh2+ 44.Kg5 Ra2 45.Kf6 and mate is very close now. Such continuations are indicative of the power of coordination between pieces with complementary properties.]

40.Bd5

[40.Bd5 Black can only set a silly trap with 40...Re2 (easily losing is 40...Rxa5 41.Re6+ Kd7 42.Rxe5 Kd6 43.Rxh5 Rxd5 44.Rxd5+ Kxd5 45.Kg4 Ke5 46.Kg5) 41.a6 Bd4 42.a7 Bg1, but White will play simply 43.Kh4 (and not 43.a8Q Rxh2#)]

43...Rxh2+ 44.Kg5 winning easily. Apparently, Kasparov still had one minute left when he gave up the struggle.

AFTER THE RESULT

Kramnik not only scored a most important point, but also dominates the match psychologically. In both games he controlled the flow of the battle, never really giving Kasparov a chance to impose his style. I expected the World Champion to have difficulties with such an approach, but never to crack so quickly under pressure.

This promises to be an exciting match!

NOTE: These notes were completed a little after 10:00p.m. (Greek time) and without the use of a computer program. Therefore, I ask to be excused for any big mistakes that may have crept in and welcome all corrections and additions to my comments.

Ilias Kourkounakis] **1-0**

KASPAROV,G (2815) - KRAMNIK,V (2770) [C67] WCCwch London (3),12.10.2000

[Kramnik created a whole new match situation by winning the 2nd game convincingly, having drawn the 1st without much difficulty with Black. Kasparov hasn't lost an official game with regular time controls since January 1999, so, naturally, his immediate reaction in the 3rd game will be crucial. On such occasions Karpov used to calm down with a safe draw, even if this meant failure to take advantage of the White pieces. He knew fully well that there was enough time to take revenge and he kept working at it. Of course, this was in the days of 24-game matches.

The World Champion is a different species and has often won decisively immediately after a defeat, thus redressing the balance. Therefore, the choice of opening will be crucial: it shall demonstrate both his psychological state and his overall creative approach to the match.

Kasparov may continue as if nothing has happened and apply a strategy similar to the one he used against Anand: knowing it will be a long match, he may test all his opponent's basic defenses and then strike against what he perceives as the weakest one. In that case, it makes sense to prefer 1.d4.

Another option is to go for a theoretical duel with 1.e4, which Kramnik should accept.]

1.e4 e5

[This is all according to my predictions on the Hellas Chess Club site: the Sicilian must be kept for a later date and would suit Kasparov fine at this moment. The challenger has already indicated that he is ready for the Scotch, but if Kasparov persists with the Ruy Lopez, then Kramnik should enter some main line. The purpose of such a change is twofold: first he must keep his opponent in shifting ground (psychological reason) and second he must demonstrate mastery of the classical Ruy (chessic reason). Nobody ever became World Champion without deep understanding of openings like the Ruy Lopez and the Queen's Gambit (in later days, the Sicilian as well, while even later the King's Indian was included in the list). In any case, it will be interesting to see if Kramnik will be able to succeed in

maintaining two trends I identified in games 1 and 2: disallowing fruitful pawn breaks and transposing quickly to endgames.]

2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6

[I have to admit this came as a surprise to me. Although I do not consider the variation at all bad, it does not seem to have sufficient stature to be played repeatedly in a World Championship match. Either Kramnik really believes in it and has incorporated it as a crucial weapon in his opening repertoire, or he considers its subjective merits worthy of the risk.

Time will tell, of course, but for now the ball is in Kasparov's court!]

4.O-O Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8

[The general ideas in this variation, for both White and Black, are presented extensively in my commentary to first game of the match.]

9.Nc3 Bd7 10.b3 h6 11.Bb2 Kc8 12.Rad1

[The first new move in this championship, but not in grandmaster practice. As mentioned in the comments to Game 1, this was previously played in Shirov-Krasenkow, Polanica Zdroj 2000 (August 20), which is given there in full. For some reason which may become clear later, Kasparov refrains altogether from the idea of advancing his kingside pawn majority, at least for the time being.]

12...b6

[Kramnik is the first to vary from that game, although what counts here is not so much individual moves, but ideas. Transpositions occur quite easily, because the two armies have little immediate contact and pieces of both sides may reach the same squares in different move orders.

Krasenkow chose 12...a5 and only after 13.h3 did he play 13...b6 , so that in reality it is Kasparov who makes a new choice with his plan in the next few moves.]

13.Ne2



[So here it is: the World Champion refrains from moving the h-pawn at all. He will concentrate on piece play, hoping for domination of space and exchanges that will eventually reveal the power of his pawn majority deep into the endgame.

Also, the manouvre ...Bf8-b4 now becomes completely meaningless.]

13...c5

[As in the first game, the Ra8 cannot be developed without moving the King to b7, which necessitates the removal of the B from the d-file. My comments there show why its transference to e6 is inferior, so Black has no alternative but to deploy it on the long h1-a8 diagonal. At the same time Kramnik prevents the use of d4 by the enemy Ns, but in return temporarily surrenders d5.]

14.c4

[Although Kasparov invested a few minutes on this move, it is practically forced. After 14.Nf4 there would follow 14...a5 , threatening to develop the R economically through the a-file, and on 15.a4 Black would acquire the breakthrough 15...c4 .]

14...Bc6

[Kramnik could also essay 14...a5 , once again provoking 15.a4 . At this point in the game, it is hard to tell whether blockage of the queenside and weakening of the Pb3 counterbalance each other completely or favour one side more than the other.

Perhaps the challenger prefers to wait for a more opportune moment, when a2-a4 would be a clear disadvantage for White. On the other hand, at that point Kasparov may simply refrain from it and the opportunity to provoke it would be gone for ever.]

15.Nf4

[Kasparov declares once and for all that he does not mind doubling his Ps and crippling his majority, if he gets the white-square B in return. In that case the superior development of his pieces is bound to tell, for example Black would have to keep the King on c8 in order to guard the invasion square d7.

Naturally, Kramnik is not at all interested in relinquishing early on the main advantage he obtained from the opening. The result of this behind-the-lines conversation, however, is that a N will soon appear on d5 and Kasparov will save considerable time and energy in comparison to Game 1.]

15...Kb7 16.Nd5



[The 1-point question, of course, is whether this apparently dominant N is accomplishing anything productive. For the time being it prevents the completion of Black's development, as ...Bf8-e7 is now quite dangerous. On the other hand, the N blocks the d-file and no longer supports the advance e5-e6.]

16...Ne7

[Eyewitness reports reveal that Kramnik had used up to now almost half an hour more than Kasparov. This is a first for the match, and a psychologically important first at that.

Kasparov took great care not to fall behind on the clock in his previous match against Anand, as the Indian is well known for his speedy play. This concern should not be equally important against Kramnik, but it is a measure of control of the proceedings, anyway.

Besides, the time spent on a position often reveals the extent of difficulties faced by each player, either to avoid disadvantage or to capitalize on a minute superiority.

Returning to the board, the N retreat follows Kramnik's ideas from the 1st game. It seems the challenger has investigated the position in depth and concluded that this particular rearrangement of forces is the most productive for Black. Nevertheless, I will venture to propose that it is not the only one, especially given the fact that Kasparov has done absolutely nothing to use his kingside pawn majority.

Another very reasonable idea is 16...a5 (now is a good time to execute this advance, since the R will soon leave the a-file) 17.a4 Re8, simply continuing the process of development. The fundamental premise of such a plan is that Kasparov will soon reach the point of maximum mobilization and will find it hard to improve his position using only piece manoeuvres. Gradually Black will catch up and establish complete equality.

A typical sample continuation would be 18.Rfe1 Be7 19.Nxe7 (otherwise the B may even retreat to d8, when manoeuvring behind the lines becomes much easier for Black, but this would be the normal course of events in this variation) 19...Rxe7 20.Rd3 Rhe8 (one idea now is ...f7-f6) 21.g4 (for which reason White could also try 21.Kf1) 21...Bxf3 22.gxf5 (worse is 22.Rxf3 Nd4) 22...Bg4 23.Rg3 Bxf5 24.Rxg7 Bg6 and ...Re8-d8. Naturally, this variation is far from forced, but I think it indicates the resilience of Black's position when White restricts the play on piece manoeuvres.]

17.Rfe1

[Kasparov has completed the mobilization of his pieces and may soon attempt the breakthrough e5-e6. This would cede the square d6 to the enemy black-squared B, but the removal of the Pe5 from the board will open wide new possibilities for 3(!) of the Champion's pieces.]



17...Rg8

[A rather unexpected move at this point, although typical in this variation. Kramnik

obviously wishes to avoid any unpleasant surprises on the a1-h8 diagonal and the Pg7 in particular, but it is unclear whether this fits in with his previous move. A more consistent option is 17...Rd8, adding more pressure on the dominant Nd5, but it runs into 18.e6 when Black faces a difficult choice: comparatively best is 18...Bxd5 (18...fxe6 19.Nf4 Rxd1 20.Rxd1 when invasion on d8 is impossible to prevent without fatal concessions 20...Nf5 21.Rd8; 18...Nxd5 19.exf7 and White should win without much difficulty; 18...f6 (trying to keep lines closed) 19.Nf4 Rxd1 20.Rxd1 Kc8 21.h4 Rg8 22.Kf1) 19.cxd5 (but not 19.exf7 Bxf3 20.Rxd8 Nc6) and now practically forced is 19...f6 (of course not 19...fxe6 20.dxe6; or 19...Nxd5 20.exf7 c6 21.Ne5 etc.) 20.Nh4 Rg8 transposing to the line analysed immediately below.;

Since all this could be predicted by Kramnik, he must have also examined the variation 17...Bxd5 18.cxd5 Rd8. Now White has an imposing centre with apparently sufficient piece support, but cannot maintain it. Black's problem is that Kasparov would not want to, in any case, since its primary function is to advance at the appropriate moment, which seems to have arrived: 19.e6 f6 (the variations mentioned above demonstrate the necessity to keep closed as many lines as possible) 20.Nh4 A) much better than the immediate 20...Rxd5, when the forced sequence 21.Rxd5 Nxd5 22.Ng6 Rg8 23.e7 Bxe7 24.Rd1 (of course, not 24.Nxe7 Re8) 24...c6 25.Nxe7 Re8 26.Nxd5 cxd5 27.Kf1 Kc6 28.Re1 leads to a technical win for White; B) 20...Rg8 (a surprisingly productive move for White) 21.g4 Rxd5 (after 21...Nxd5 22.Ng6 there is no adequate defense to 23.e7) 22.Nf5 (now 22.Rxd5 Nxd5 23.Ng6 Bd6 proves insufficient) 22...c6 23.Ne3 (an attacking retreat reminiscent of Kasparov's manoeuvres in the 1st game) and White infiltrates the enemy camp with disicive consequences, e.g. 23...Rxd1 24.Rxd1 Nd5 25.Nxd5 cxd5 26.Rxd5 Kc8 27.Rd7 etc.

All these variations demonstrate the problems Black faces every time the position opens up before development is complete. If 17...Rg8 is the best move in the position, I believe the alternative I suggested earlier deserves closer scrutiny.]

**18.Nf4 g5 19.Nh5 Rg6 20.Nf6 Bg7 21.Rd3 Bxf3 22.Rxf3 Bxf6 23.exf6 Nc6
24.Rd3 Rf8 25.Re4 Kc8 26.f4 gxf4 27.Rxf4 Re8 28.Bc3 Re2 29.Rf2 Re4
30.Rh3 a5 31.Rh5 a4 32.bxa4 Rxc4 33.Bd2 Rxa4 34.Rxh6 Rg8 35.Rh7 Rxa2
36.Rxf7 Ne5 37.Rg7 Rf8 38.h3 c4 39.Re7 Nd3 40.f7 Nxf2 41.Re8+ Kd7
42.Rxf8 Ke7 43.Rc8 Kxf7 44.Rxc7+ Ke6 45.Be3 Nd1 46.Bxb6 c3 47.h4 Ra6
48.Bd4 Ra4 49.Bxc3 Nxc3 50.Rxc3 Rxh4 51.Rf3 Rh5 52.Kf2 Rg5 53.Rf8 Ke5
½-½**

18.Nf4



[A N retreat reminiscing the Champion's manouvres of the 1st game, reportedly after nearly 30 minutes of thinking by Kasparov. The obvious move is 18.e6 , but then 18...fxe6 (18...f6 19.Nh4 Bxd5 20.cxd5 Rd8 21.g4 transposes to the analysis of the previous note) 19.Rxe6 Nxd5 (the capture 19...Bxd5 allows White to nurse his development advantage into the endgame after 20.cxd5 Rd8 21.d6 cxd6 22.Rxd6 Rxd6 23.Rxd6 etc.) 20.cxd5 Bd7 allows Black to solve most problems in a very satisfactory way.]

18...g5

[Kramnik could not imitate the N retreat with 18...Nf5 , as then he would have played the useless move ...Rh8-g8 against Rf1-e1 by Kasparov. The pawn advance is clearly risky, but is now the only reasonable way to activate the black-squared B and its neighbouring R.]

19.Nh5 Rg6 20.Nf6

[Otherwise Black will play ...Rg6-e6 and feel much more comfortable. A big part of the battle to come will undoubtedly revolve around this R's ability to participate actively in the fight.]

20...Bg7

[Another forced move, to prevent 21.e6. The game is clearly in a transition phase, provoked by Kramnik's radical 18...g5 advance, at the end of which the position will have very different characteristics.]

21.Rd3



[A sensible, multi-faceted move that more or less blackmails the following exchange. Bringing the R on the 3rd rank serves various functions, aside from the obvious intent to double on the d-file: in the first place it protects the N, while in addition it may be used on the kingside, should lines open there all of a sudden. An equally "Soviet" preparatory action is 21.Kf1 , removing the K from the g-file and bringing it closer to the centre.]

21...Bxf3

[In changing the nature of the position and bringing it closer to a real ending, Kramnik relinquishes his main advantage: the white-squared B. The only way of keeping the tension is 21...Rf8 22.Red1 Kc8 , not an attractive possibility when he has only about 30' minutes to reach move 40. In such a situation it is actually Black who has maximized the effectiveness of his pieces and only White can make serious improvements, but at least there would exist the threat 23...Bxf6 24.exf6 Ng8.

Although the challenger's practical choice appears prudent under the specific sporting circumstances, it is probably worth it to go a little deeper in this position. Such "gray" areas in important matches are not few and far between, but there is never enough time to examine all of them in sufficient depth. Therefore, I will limit myself in pointing some of them out.;

Nevertheless, it is worth adding that the immediate 21...Bxf6 22.exf6 Ng8 fails against 23.Ne5 Rxf6 24.Nxc6 Rxc6 25.Rd7 , when the extra pawn is meaningless but the domination of open lines of paramount importance, e.g. 25...f5 26.Rf7 f4 27.h4 and the combination 2Rs+B is definitely superior to 2Rs+N in this kind of position.]

22.Rxf3

[The alternative capture 22.gxf3 allows the forcing sequence 22...Bxf6 23.exf6 Ng8 24.Rd7 Nxf6 25.Rxf7 Ne8 and 26...Nd6, after which most of Black's serious problems are solved.]

22...Bxf6

[Now that the Nf6 has twin protection the positional threat 23.e6 has been revived, in addition to 23.Nh5 which opens both the f-file and the a1-h8 diagonal. Therefore, yet another exchange of B for N is forced and the game soon enters a completely new stage.]

23.exf6 Nc6



[The time has come to reevaluate the position, with White seemingly enjoying a distinct superiority. Every one of Kasparov's pieces is far more active than its enemy counterpart, the only question being whether Black will be able to play at some point ...Nc6-d4 in order to force further liquidation. Otherwise, it will be much easier for the White Rs and King to improve their positions even more and initiate a decisive breakthrough.]

Kasparov should concentrate his attention on the kingside, because that's where his King is. A timely h2-h4 or f2-f4 will allow it to attack some enemy pawn, but this should be done carefully, since at the same time the enemy R will also be freed. This endgame presents special interest in the way small asymmetries add up to destroy the equilibrium.]

24.Rd3

[Necessary, otherwise Black will play 24...Rd8, ...Rd8-d6 and very soon ...Nc6-d4.]

24...Rf8

[The R must make room for the King, who in turn will prevent occupation of the 7th rank.]

25.Re4

[Once again, it is clear that White cannot make much headway without a pawn break. Kasparov prepares both h2-h4 and f2-f4, but which is really the better of the two?]

25...Kc8



26.f4

[White cannot delay action any longer, since Black is by now fully ready for ...Nc6-d4, e.g. 26.Kf1 Nd4 27.Bxd4 cxd4 28.Rdxd4 Rxf6 29.Re7 Re6 30.Rxe6 (30.Rdd7 Rxe7 31.Rxe7 Kd8 is completely useless; , while 30.Red7 Rfe8 and ...Re7 is equally unappealing) 30...fxe6 and the pawn weaknesses are not enough for a decisive advantage. It is true White could try a different initial move like 26.g3 in order to use the sub-variation with 30.Red7, but then a counterattack with ...Re6-e2 would be possible.;

Naturally, the other break 26.h4 needs to be considered carefully. After 26...Nd4 27.Bxd4 cxd4 28.Rdxd4 Rxf6 29.hxg5 hxg5 30.Rd5 (not 30.Re5 Rg6 with a minimal advantage, e.g. 31.Re7 Re6) the only correct reply is 30...Rd8 (the small but important difference is that after 30...Rg6 now follows 31.Re7 and Black cannot play

31...Re6 32.Rxe6 fxe6 33.Rxg5) , when 31.Rxg5 Rd1+ 32.Kh2 Rxf2 ensures full equality.]

26...gxf4

[Apparently Kramnik feels it is necessary to aim for active piece counterplay. The variation 26...Nd4 27.Bxd4 cxd4 28.Rdxd4 Rxf6 would bring the game close to equality once again. Could it be that he was hoping for more at this stage?]

27.Rxf4 Re8

[The real question in this position is the advanced Pf6. It can certainly be dangerous as part of White's majority, but it also blocks the B and may become a target. Its value will probably be determined by the activity dispalyed by the Kings in the near future.

For the time being, Kasparov must take care of his 2nd rank.]

28.Bc3

[A rare defensive move by the Champion. After 28.Kf2 Re6 (but not 28...Ne5 29.Re3 , since 29...Ng4+ is unplayable because of 30.Rxg4 Rxe3 31.Rxg6 etc.) 29.Rg3 Rxg3 30.hxg3 Black is just in time for 30...Nd4 to prevent the idea Rf4-h4.]

28...Re2 29.Rf2 Re4

[Kramnik's only problem seems to be that he has 18 minutes left to reach move 40 (inclusive), against 33 for Kasparov. On the board, the alternative 29...Rxf2 30.Kxf2 Nd4 31.Bxd4 cxd4 32.Rxd4 Rxf6+ 33.Kg3 could give him some extra headache, because of the idea Rd4-f4.]

30.Rh3

[As a matter of fact, Kasparov cannot afford to remain idle, either. About 12 minutes of thought must have convinced him that the idea ...Nc6-d4 and ...Kc8-d7-e6 could make life dangerous even for him.

This is why he is redirecting his forces against the weakling Ph6.]

30...a5

[The counterargument is that meanwhile Black has taken over the centre. Kramnik essays a counterattack that begs the question whether it would have proved much more useful to have the moves ...a7-a5 and a2-a4 inserted at an earlier moment. With new complication coming up, it was reported that both players had 15 minutes available for the next 10 moves.

It was also worth considering 30...Ne5 ;
, as well as 30...Kd7 . After the latter, for example, White cannot play 31.Bd2 Ne5 32.Rxh6 Rxh6 33.Bxh6 Ng4 34.Rd2+ Ke6 and the mate threat wins the B.]

31.Rh5

[Kasparov decides to prevent ...Nc6-e5, probably in anticipation of his next suprising move.]

31...a4



32.bxa4

[An astoundingly unorthodox decision, with which Kasparov practically abandons the queenside at the mercy of the enemy pieces in order to promote his chances on the opposite side of the board. He is surely hoping that in such situations the long-range

B most often proves superior to the short-stepping N. On the other hand, every tempo in advancing the Ps may prove crucial.

Meanwhile, it is true that both 32.Bd2 Ne5 and;

32.h3 axb3 33.axb3 Re3 34.Bd2 Rxb3 35.Rxh6 Rxh6 36.Bxh6 Ne5 also contained serious losing chances for White.]

32...Rxc4 33.Bd2 Rxa4 34.Rxh6 Rg8

[It is practically impossible to calculate all the consequences of an exchange like 34...Rxh6 35.Bxh6 in time trouble, but it seems quite clear that Kramnik feared then the rapid advance of the h-pawn.]

35.Rh7 Rxa2

[Of course, not 35...Rf8 36.Bh6 when White wins the Pf7 anyway, but without surrendering the Pa2.]

36.Rxf7



[Similar positions with so many passed Ps from both sides arise very rarely in World Championship matches. One that readily comes to mind is the 13th Spassky-Fischer battle (1972), which must have caused equal excitement.]

36...Ne5

[I have to admit that I am unable to calculate all the intricacies of this endgame in the limited time available to me, so I will stick to what comments I am most sure about. I suspect the verdict on the tactical details of what follows shall be finalised after the match.]

37.Rg7 Rf8 38.h3

[For example, this is a move I do not understand. Kasparov probably wishes to avoid any unpleasantness of the ...Ne5-g4 type, but this is unnecessary when g4 is guarded by a R. 38.h4 looks much preferable to me, time trouble or not. One only has to calculate that 38...Nd3 is unplayable because of 39.f7 Nxf2 (or 39...Kd7 40.Rg8 Ke7 41.Rxf8 Kxf8 42.Bh6+) 40.Rg8 etc.]

38...c4 39.Re7

[This manoeuvre justifies Kasparov's previous move, but I still think the rapid advance of the h-pawn was preferable.]

39...Nd3 40.f7 Nxf2

[The last move of the first time control is an accurate one. After 40...Kd8 41.Re8+ Rxe8 42.Bg5+ Kd7 43.fxe8Q+ Kxe8 44.Rxa2 Black would lose immediately.]

41.Re8+ Kd7 42.Rxf8 Ke7



43.Rc8

[More flashy, but actually worse, was 43.Rd8 Kxf7 44.Kxf2 c3 45.Ke3 Rxd2 46.Rxd2 cxd2 47.Kxd2 with a draw in the offing. Kasparov is naturally interested in testing his opponent much more than that.]

43...Kxf7 44.Rxc7+ Ke6 45.Be3 Nd1 46.Bxb6

[The trap 46.Rxc4, hoping for 46...Nxe3 47.Re4+, almost backfires after 46...Rxc7+ . Fortunately for White, he can still draw in that case with 47.Kh1 .]

46...c3



47.h4

[I would definitely prefer 47.Kh2, since the Ps almost always need K support. Now Kramnik forces simplification to a theoretically drawn R endgame.]

47...Ra6 48.Bd4 Ra4 49.Bxc3 Nxc3 50.Rxc3 Rxh4 51.Rf3 Rh5 52.Kf2 Rg5 53.Rf8 Ke5

[53...Ke5 A likely continuation would be 54.Kf3 Rf5+ 55.Rxf5+ Kxf5 56.Kg3 Kg5 Definitely the most exciting game so far, so I am quite unhappy not to have been able to follow it live. In addition, it is the most difficult to analyse among the three, which probably means the tension is building up. This should favor Kasparov, who has vast experience in matches at this level, but so far Kramnik has demonstrated he can play at an equal level.] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2849) [D27] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (4), 14.10.2000

[After 3 games, the match has acquired a pace of its own -and Kramnik is in the driver's seat. Not only is he leading 1-0 with two draws, but he also appears to be in full control. He has committed no serious mistakes and been in very little danger. He has managed to steer the games in types of positions that do not suit Kasparov at all, without active piece play or serious pawn breaks. It is probably significant that with Black he goes for Queenless middlegames, that do not allow his illustrious opponent to display his imagination and combinative skills.

But Kramnik has not really shown anything new in chess yet. Kasparov has extensive experience in World Championship matches and lots of stamina, so he cannot be beaten simply by avoiding his strong points. To become Champion, at some point Kramnik will have to play like a Champion and defeat Kasparov in complicated battles. He must show that he is at least equal in tactical situations repeatedly, as he did in the second game between them in Linares this year.

Meanwhile, he is White again and both players have to choose an appropriate opening. I believe Kramnik will stick to 1.d4, probably the strongest move against Kasparov anyway. He was successful in his first White game and cannot complain at all about the position he got. Since he demonstrated readiness to engage in a theoretical discussion with Black,

especially by using the rather unorthodox Berlin Defence to the Ruy Lopez, there is no reason why he should avoid a similar discussion with White.

Kasparov has a bigger problem. Perhaps for the first time in his life, he finds himself in a special situation early in an event: he cannot afford to lose. Losing his second Black game would create a serious crisis in his camp and make the score almost untenable after only four games! His choice lies among three major alternatives: playing again the Grunfeld Defence, switching over to the Queen's Gambit, and introducing a third surprise opening. I do not quite believe he will go for the King's Indian, because he has not been successful with it against Kramnik in the past. Besides, if he had included the King's Indian in his match repertoire, he should have probably tried it in his very first Black game. The risk now would be too great.

Let us examine then each choice in turn, but in reverse order. Introducing a new opening, like the Benko Gambit (which suits his style perfectly but has limited potential) or the Leningrad Dutch, could create as a big surprise for Kramnik as the Dragon did for Anand in 1995. The problem with such an approach is twofold. First, Kasparov needs to believe in the correctness of his openings and not simply their practical advantages, a consideration that severely limits his choices (for example, his old favourite the Benoni, is most probably out). Second, also important, Kasparov has shown a tendency to introduce some serious surprise after the middle point of a match, at the psychologically most crucial turning point. To «burn» it so early would be undesirable.

The Queen's Gambit is a safe good option, but it indicates limited aspirations with Black. It would mean that the pace of the match remains slow, with Kasparov and his team preparing to hit back with a vengeance in Game 5. This approach has the added advantage that tension would be built gradually, something that should favour Kasparov. Its problem? Kasparov is not familiar with a safety first approach, having limited himself to asymmetrical openings in recent years.

The Grunfeld Defence remains Kasparov's primary alternative. It entails some risks, but is consistent with his principles and maintains the theoretical debate mode of the match. If Kramnik needs to play like a Champion to become one, so does Kasparov to retain his title! The problem here is that historically the Grunfeld has been better for Kasparov in tournaments than in matches.

What will Kramnik do? The advantage for White these days lies not only in the first move, but also in the ability to choose more freely the type of position that will occur in the middlegame. In most cases, Black decides about the opening that is used in a game, but White chooses the specific variation.

In the case of a surprise opening or the Queens Gambit, Kramnik will simply go for the variation he has considered before the match. The Grunfeld Defence is much trickier, exactly because he has won the first game with it. It is not so easy to decide exactly which variation to play, since psychological considerations become paramount.

Fischer said that the best psychology is the best moves, a theory fully

accepted by Lautier, who is one of Kramnik's official seconds. This means that the challenger should continue with what has been successful for him, until proven wrong, and wait for Kasparov to vary the game at a point of his choice. A strategy like this is more risky with Black, but now Kramnik can afford to use it with both colours.

On the other hand, Fischer did not always practice what he preached: after winning convincingly with the Benoni in Game 3 against Spassky in 1972, in his very next Black game he chose the NimzoIndian Defence, while later he also used the semi-Tarrasch in the Queen's Gambit. Karpov has used the same approach when leading a match, that is after apparently winning a theoretical battle. A «moving target» attitude may destabilise the opponent with minimal risk, especially since Kramnik must have prepared seriously at least two variations against the Grunfeld. Then he can revert to his first choice at a later game.

These were my predictions before the game. One of the players had a big surprise in store for me and many others.]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4



[This is it! Discussing possible alternative before the game with some friends who suggested the Queen's Gambit Accepted for Kasparov, I was strongly against it, because I did not consider it suits his style well. Although it has gained in reputation recently, as even Anand has included it in his repertoire (there are games of the Indian GM against both Kasparov and Kramnik), it has never gained a wide acceptance at top level.

My most serious objection against the Queen's Gambit Accepted was not that using it wastes a possible surprise weapon that may be much more useful later in the match (as argued in my introductory remarks), but instead that it would allow Kramnik to pursue the match strategy he has followed consistently up to now: in many subvariations White can force a queenless middlegame with a slight advantage, in which Kasparov would suffer without ever hoping for more than the half point.

In addition, such a choice would admit temporary defeat in the theoretical debate on the Grunfeld.]

3.Nf3 e6 4.e3 c5

[Black cannot do without this freeing advance, which however allows White to engage in multiple exchanges and a symmetrical pawn structure without pawn breaks.]

5.Bxc4 a6 6.O-O Nf6



7.dxc5

[And here it comes! Kramnik once again practically forces the exchange of Qs, while still keeping open the possibility to try for the full point. Even if Kasparov manages to draw, he is likely to have to work for it. Spassky followed a similar approach when he played Fischer in 1992.]

7...Qxd1 8.Rxd1 Bxc5

[A position with symmetrical pawn distribution has occurred, which means that a draw is quite likely. Nevertheless, White enjoys a slight lead in development and greater flexibility regarding the pawn structure on the queenside. Many players have used this approach in order to minimize the risk of losing, a consideration surely important to Kramnik at this point of the match.

The traditional centre of the board (squares d4-d5-e5-e4) has been transferred "west", with the open c- and d-files being much more important now. Both players have a strongpoint on the d-file, in order to block the invasion of an enemy R, while the c-file is still up for grabs. As is often the case, the fight for lines on which to activate the Rs shall be determined by the minor pieces, which control important entry points.

In this respect, the pawn structure on the queenside can become very important, because it may tie up some minor pieces in awkward defensive roles. For example, the early advance ...a7-a6 could force Black to post a N on d7, thus blocking the d-file. Then the b-pawn will have to advance one or two squares, in order to allow for the development of the white-squared B, and in this way weaken slightly some important points on the c-file.

Overall, the early simplification of the position may give it a deceptively simple appearance. In reality, there is still a lot of play left.]

9.Nbd2

[Spassky tried 9.b3 3 times against Fischer in 1992, with mixed results.

Other significant options are;

9.Nc3 and; 9.a3 , each with its own special characteristics. Very often

though, a transposition may lead from one subvariation to the other. Kramnik had used 9.Nbd2 in the past, even if only in rapid games. Therefore, by choosing the Queen's Gambit Accepted Kasparov must have been ready for it. Its basic idea is to challenge for some black squares on the queenside by advancing to either b3 or c4, depending on Black's reaction, of course.] 9...Nbd7 [The only time Spassky chose 9.Nbd2 against Fischer, the American GM replied 9...0-0 10.a3 b5 . The extended fianchetto seems to gain some time for development and keeps control of c4, but on the other hand makes c5 more vulnerable and subject to occupation by an enemy N in the future.]

10.Be2

[Kramnik signals his intention to work on both the c- and d-files, either with Nd2-c4 or Nd2-b3. The B had no future on the a2-g8 diagonal, since Black has no intention of ever advancing ...e6-e5.]



10...b6

[An important "small" decision, with large consequences. In such situations, both players must constantly choose between apparently equivalent alternatives without some concrete criteria.

I suspect this is also part of a very conscious match plan by Kramnik, with the express aim of making Kasparov feel uncomfortable. The World Champion has demonstrated supreme mastery in complicated positions, in which accurate calculation can lead to definite conclusions. His decisions then have a high degree of confidence, which in turn leads to better play. However, when Kasparov is forced to depend purely on positional intuition about the long-term characteristics of the position, he might feel less sure of himself. Any doubts about his ability to cope with the problems of the position may bring on time trouble and shaky play, or even unforced errors. The above observations should not lead to the mistaken impression that Kasparov is weak in positions like the one in the game. Naturally he is strong in any type of position (otherwise he wouldn't be the strongest player of our time), but for Kramnik to beat him he must go for situations that do not allow Kasparov to display the full range of his enormous abilities.]

11.Nb3

[In three rapid games, Kramnik has used 11.Nc4 instead. Since however his second Bareev has played 11.Nb3 in the past, Kasparov must have been ready for this eventuality as well.

Kramnik's present choice practically forces the retreat of the enemy black-squared B, but also creates some difficulties for the development of his own.]

11...Be7

[Neither side can afford to exchange one of its Bs for a N in such an open position. Both have kept great flexibility in their pawn structure, which means they are ready to deploy the foot soldiers in any way they need in order to block an enemy B -but not both. Generally, the most important factor as the game progresses will most likely be which piece exchanges are made and when. Meanwhile, both armies possess somewhat strong squares for their Ns in the centre, but none that is permanently secure from a pawn attack.]

12.Nfd4

[The N is centralized not in order to challenge for the c6 square, but to prepare White's next move and thus facilitate the development of the Bc1. Its small defects are that it blocks the d-file and leaves the important square e5 temporarily unguarded.]

12...Bb7



[Despite the early exchange of Qs, the position should not be treated as an endgame. All the other pieces are still on the board and there aren't any pawns likely to become passed in the near future. Such a situation should be treated as a more or less balanced queenless middlegame, with emphasis on the acquisition of small advantages.

For the time being, White's advantage appears negligible and therefore perfect play should lead to an uneventful draw.]

13.f3

[Kramnik aims to control more space in the centre and at the same time to develop the Bc1 in a productive spot. After 13.Bf3 Bxf3 14.gxf3 Rc8 he would not be on time to take advantage of the relative weakness of c6.]

13...O-O

[Naturally, the function of castling in this position is not to provide a secure shelter for the King, but only to allow the Rh8 to participate in the battle.]

Kasparov would probably be much happier if he could keep his monarch closer to the centre for the endgame, but unfortunately his B does not have a better alternative than e7.]

14.e4

[Now White has slightly better squares for his minor pieces. If Kasparov wishes to control equal space with equal material, he must resort at some point to the idea ...g7-g6 and ...e6-e5. Restricting himself purely to piece manouvres means he is likely to need some exchanges, especially a pair of Ns and possibly a pair of Rs.]

14...Rfc8

[The correct R, so that the King may return closer to the centre.]

15.Be3 Kf8



16.Nd2

[This is technically a novelty, one that Kramnik had most probably prepared (if only for another game) and Kasparov possibly anticipated. The game Bareev-Rublevsky, Elista 1996, saw 16.Kf2 Ne5 17.Nd2 Rc7 18.N4b3 Rc6 19.Rac1 Rac8 20.Rxc6 Rxc6, with a position quite similar to K-K. It is worth noting the rest of the game, in order to make clear what Kramnik's true innovation is. 21.h3 Ke8 22.Bd4 Nfd7 23.Rc1 Rxc1 24.Nxc1 f6 25.a3 Bd6 26.b4 a5 27.Bc3 axb4 28.axb4 Ke7 29.Ndb3 g5 30.Nd4 Nc6 31.Nc2 h6 32.Nb3 Nce5 33.Nbd4 h5 34.Bb5 h4 35.Ne3 Nf8 36.Bf1 Nfd7 37.Ke1 Bb8 38.Bb5 Nf8 39.Nc4 Nxc4 40.Bxc4 Be5 41.Kd2 Bxd4 42.Bxd4 Nd7 43.Bb5 e5 44.Be3 Kd6 45.Bc4 Kc7 and ½-½.]

16...Ne5

[At this point, both players had spent about half an hour of their available time, but now Kasparov thought for quite a while. This indicates that he was trying to figure out whether Kramnik was simply going to transpose to his second's game, by simply inverting the move order, or whether the opponent's specific choice has some independent significance. Another serious possibility was 16...Rc7, preparing the doubling of Rs on the c-file while at the same time keeping the b-pawn securely covered.]

17.N4b3

[Apparently Kramnik has decided that moving the King is not such a productive way to use a tempo at this phase of the game and prefers to execute Bareev's manoeuvres one move earlier.

Furthermore, it soon becomes clear that Kramnik obtains virtually the same position with his King on g1 rather than f2, since Black plays the Rc8 to c6 in one move rather than two. This can mean either that he feels the King is safer on g1 or that he does not know the above mentioned game and is improvising along the way.

The future will bring out the truth in this matter, but for the time being we must restrict ourselves in examining the merits of each idea on its own right, regardless of Kramnik's consciousness.]

17...Rc6

[Forced, but good. Blocking the B is not a true problem, because it had limited mobility anyway. It is much more important to activate the Rs, in order to force some exchanges.

A typical positional mistake would be the pseudo-active advance 17...b5, which assumes control of c4 but at the same time relinquishes a5. After 18.Na5 the exchange of N for B is unavoidable, also forcing the R to temporarily abandon the c-file.]

18.Rac1

[There is no point in keeping both Rs on the board. Meanwhile, attacking the R with 18.Nd4 would be meaningless, as after 18...Rc7 Black has gained a tempo and White doesn't have anything better than 19.N4b3, leading to a repetition of the position (19...Rc6). Kramnik is obviously interested in more than a quick draw -Kasparov may get his half point, but he will have to work for it!;

An interesting alternative is 18.f4, but it is understandable that the challenger does not wish to provoke an early crisis without first having established better coordination between his pieces.]

18...Rac8 19.Rxc6 Rxc6



20.g4

[This is the true innovation in the game, not a move, but a plan well deep into the middlegame. Kramnik aims to control more space all over the board, avoiding further unnecessary exchanges.

Especially significant, compared to the Bareev-Rublevsky game, is that

Kramnik refuses to exchange the second pair of Rs. Once he manages to push back some of the enemy forces (Ns in particular), he will want to possess as many pieces with different properties as possible. This will allow him to create threats of greater variety and put more pressure on Kasparov. Last but not least, the advance of the kingside pawns demonstrates once again Kramnik's ability in this match to obtain positions with hidden potential, having first limited Kasparov's counterplay by denying him meaningful pawn breaks.]

20...h6

[A good defensive idea, as exchanging the h-pawns leaves fewer targets for the enemy pieces.]

21.h4 Bc8

[Another useful precaution, providing extra support to the square d7, on which the Nf6 will inevitably land. Counterattack with 21...Rc2 is rather premature: one R does not bring the summer! White then can continue simply 22.Bxb6, not fearing 22...Rxb2 23.Bd4 and Black suffers serious material losses. One idea for the defender would be the intermediate move 22...Nc6, forcing 23.Rb1 and after 23...Nd7 24.Bf2 (the h-pawn was "hanging"), in order to recapture the b-pawn. Unfortunately for Black, there is the continuation 24...Bf6 25.Kf1 (threatening 26.Nc4 and possibly 27.Bd3 or 27.Bd1) 25...Rxb2 (even worse is 25...Bxb2 26.Bd1, but not 26.Bd3 Rc3) 26.Rxb2 Bxb2 27.Nc4 and the N will land on d6, forcing the win of the a-pawn.]

22.g5 hxg5 23.hxg5 Nfd7

[Reports say that both players had a little less than an hour of thinking time left until move 40. This should not be a problem in such a position, although tension is mounting steadily.]

24.f4 Ng6



25.Nf3

[The idea of this redeployment is to open the d-file and threaten 26.Bxa6. 25.Nd4 would prevent the invasion of the enemy R, but would also limit White's potential. It seems Kramnik wants to entice his opponent into

counterattacking at the wrong moment.]

25...Rc2

[More than one commentator before me has pointed out that the World Champion feels uncomfortable when he has to defend passively. This risky attempt to activate a lonely R gets him into serious trouble, while it was still possible to play for a "zoning" defence with 25...Ke8. Then Kramnik would lack any concrete way to create serious threats and Kasparov would be out of any immediate danger.

It is worth noting how consistent 25...Ke8 is with previous moves like 15...Kf8 and 21...Bc8. Petrosian is still the most difficult to imitate among World Champions!]

26.Bxa6

[A "wimpy" approach like 26.Rd2 makes no sense after 25.Nf3.]

26...Bxa6 27.Rxd7

[Now both Rs are active, but only Kramnik's has real hopes to combine its actions with other pieces. The idea f4-f5 should give Kasparov serious headaches, while the b-pawn seems much weaker than its counterpart on a2 (at some point White may win a crucial tempo by playing Rd7-a7).]



27...Rxb2

[Tremendous complications arise after 27...Re2 28.Bxb6, when Black has the option of capturing either on e4 or f4. It is true that then his N escapes from g6 without personal damage, but the idea Rd7-a7 combined with Ra7-a8 will force ...Ba6-b5, when a double attack with a N from d4 is possible. Therefore, a likely continuation is 28...Rxe4 (as explained, it is not possible to play 28...Nxf4 due to the forcing variation 29.Ra7 Bb5 30.Nbd4 Rg2+ 31.Kh1 Be8 32.Bc7 Rg4 33.Nh2 Rh4 34.Ndf3 and Black loses material; , while after 28...Rxb2 29.Ra7 Bb5 30.Nfd4 (better than the immediate 30.Bc7, when Black will not continue 30...Rxb3 31.Ra8+ but 30...Bc6) 30...Be8 31.Bc7 White would also be on the driver's seat) 29.Bc5 Be2 (worse seems 29...Bb5 30.Bxe7+ Ke8 31.Ra7 Nxe7 -or 31...Rxf4 32.Nfd4-32.Ra8+ Kd7 33.Nc5+) 30.Bxe7+ Ke8 31.Rd4 Bxf3 32.Rxe4 Bxe4 33.Bd6 and White should win the endgame, albeit with some difficulty.

I seriously doubt that both players calculated all the details of such lines here and in the next few moves, but of course they noticed most of them and chose the variations more likely to achieve their aims. The problem is

that both must have used much more time than in previous stages of the game, leading inevitably to time trouble.]

28.Ra7 Bb5

[As indicated earlier, Kasparov does not have the time for 28...Rxa2 , because of the simple 29.Ra8+ .]

29.f5 exf5 30.exf5



30...Re2

[One does not really expect the World Champion to retreat 30...Nh8 . Once again Kasparov responds with counterattack, justifiably this time.]

31.Nfd4

[Practically forced. After 31.Bxb6 Ne5 32.Nfd4 (or 32.Nbd4 Nxf3+ 33.Nxf3 Bc6 with apparently sufficient counterplay) 32...Re1+ Black is out of the woods.

According to reports, at this point both players had fewer than 20 minutes left. The next few moves appear forced because of the multiple attacks at each other's pieces, so that any psychological tension should be a result of the situation at the board rather than the clock.] 31...Re1+ [After 31...Rxe3 32.Nxb5 the twin threats 33.fxg6 and 33.Ra8+ decide the issue.]

32.Kf2 Rf1+ 33.Kg2

[Of course, not 33.Kg3 Bd6+ and suddenly all of Kasparov's pieces participate in a real attack against the King!]

33...Nh4+ 34.Kh3 Rh1+ 35.Kg4 Be8

[The B has no choice on an open board, because of the side threat 36.Ra8+ .]



[Although Kasparov has the 2Bs, Kramnik dominates the centre and has much better coordination of forces. In addition, the Nh4 is cornered and faces mortal danger.]

36.Bf2

[Worse is 36.Ra8 because of the reply 36...Re1 when White must go for the variation 37.Nc2 Re2 38.Nbd4 Rh2 and nothing concrete is achieved.]

36...Ng2

[No choice here either! It is quite impressive to see Kasparov's pieces so dispersed on opposite sides of the board. His 25...Rc2 has provoked a crisis that has turned out very badly for him.]



37.Ra8

[Kramnik is over-subtle, when 37.Nf3 would entrap the N and create two new threats: 38.Kg3 and 38.Bxb6 (not only winning a pawn, but also gaining access to the important square c5 -White wishes to exchange one of the enemy Bs, in order to make his King safer for the future). Kasparov would then have to take care first of the major threat by 37...Bd6, but after 38.Bxb6 Kramnik would be perfectly justified to expect a full point by the end of the day.]

37...Rf1

[37...Bd6 proves quite useless now after 38.Nb5 etc.]

38.Kf3

[After such a quiet beginning, it is impressive that this game has so many critical points already. And there is more to come...

For the time being, Kasparov must take care of his N.]



38...Nh4+

[And he does it the wrong way. What is more impressive is the reports that the World Champion replied almost immediately, despite having almost 10 minutes available to reach move 40.

The correct retreat was 38...Nf4 , severely limiting the enemy King's movements and also recentralizing the galloping horse. If then White continues 39.Nd2 , Black can respond 39...Rd1 and solve all his problems.]

39.Ke2 Rh1 40.Nb5

[At the very last move of the first time control Kramnik creates the lethal threat 41.Nc7 and is very close to his second win in the match.]

40...Bxg5

[Also losing is 40...Nxf5 41.Nc7 Nd6 , because of the simple retort 42.Bg3 and Black's defensive wall crumbles. Kasparov elects the path of greatest resistance, accepting the loss of a piece and trying to make the best out of it. His basic idea is to eliminate as many enemy pawns as possible and destroy the coordination of Kramnik's pieces, at least temporarily.]

41.Nc7 Ke7 42.Nxe8

[42.Rxe8+ would be quite silly, since after 42...Kd7 43.Bxb6 Rh2+ and 44...Rxa2 the last white pawn must depart for greener pastures.]

42...Nxf5 43.Bxb6

[Once again, Kramnik has a dangerous passed a-pawn! (see Game 2) At least, compared to Game 3, the total number of passed Ps is reduced to half as many...]



[It is time for both sides to take stock and prepare for the next phase of the battle. Theoretically White is winning, but the situation has not been made clear yet. Kramnik's R and Ne8 are not conveniently placed, while Kasparov managed to create connected passed pawns, even if they are somewhat difficult to advance.

The challenger's goal is to transform the position to one with a clear-cut plan, probably through appropriate simplification. Meanwhile Kasparov will do anything to cloud the issue, from advancing his pawns to involving both Kings in tactical adventures.]

43...Kd7

[The King goes west not in search for gold, but for salvation. One of Kasparov's secret hopes must be to exchange everything but his opponent's pawn and "wrong" B (one that cannot the queening square of the P). Apparently Kramnik thought for quite some time before playing his next move, usually a smart approach after a crisis and when entering a novel stage of a game.]

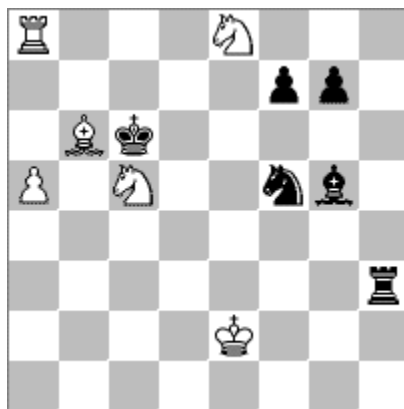
44.a4

[Speed is of the outmost importance in similar situations. A different idea is 44.Nd4 , but after 44...Nxd4+ 45.Bxd4 Rh8 46.Nf6+ (naturally not 46.Nc7 Rxa8 47.Nxa8 Bd8 etc.) 46...Bxf6 47.Rxh8 Bxd4 White's task becomes extremely difficult.]

44...Rh3

[It makes a lot of sense to cut off the enemy King, but it was worth examining 44...Bf4 as well, in order to restrict the Ne8 and prepare the advance of the g-pawn. This idea could be used in the next few moves as well, but Kasparov obviously decided it was not worth it.]

45.Nc5+ Kc6 46.a5



[Tension is mounting and Kasparov added to it by thinking for almost 40 minutes here and leaving himself with just about 15 more to reach move 60. Was he looking deep in the position the whole time, or did he also wish to make Kramnik more nervous because of the approaching mutual zeitnot? In games like this one wishes to have been spectating live, so as to reach conclusions "in the flesh".]

46...Re3+

[The big alternative is 46...Nd4+ , when an amusing variation is 47.Kd1 Rh1# ! Since however Kramnik's King can escape danger with relative ease by 47.Kf1 or 47.Kf2, Kasparov would then have to play ...Bg5-f4 at some point and exchange his B for the Ne8 when it comes to c7, in order to prevent further advance of the a-pawn. Unfortunately for the World Champion, in such a case he may have to allow the capture Ne8xg7.]
47.Kd1 [Naturally the King runs away from the enemy forces.]

47...Re7

[Maybe this was the last time to play 47...Bf4 .]

48.Rc8+ Kb5



49.Ne4

[The basic reason my comments to this game are somewhat late is that Sunday was Election Day for the Greek Chess Federation. During the meeting I showed my brief notes to Master Antonis Bogdanos, having

chosen to print a diagram at this very point. In a matter of minutes he suggested that 49.Nc7+ Kc4 and only now 50.Ne4 was much stronger, since the Black King is forced to steer away from the passed pawn. A sample variation is 50...Rxe4 51.Ne6+ Kb5 52.Nxg5 Rf4 53.Nxf7 Ne3+ 54.Bxe3 Rxf7 55.Rc5+ and White should have no trouble at all coordinating the remaining pieces. Without the Rs the game would be a theoretical draw, but in this case it constitutes an easy win.
Now events develop by force for the next few moves.]

49...Rxe4

[49...Bf4 would be worse, since after 50.Rc5+ Ka6 51.Rxf5 Rxe4 there is a small but useful tactical detail: 52.Rxf7 and the rest is a matter of simple technique.]

50.Rc5+ Ka6 51.Nc7+ Kb7 52.Rxf5 Be3

[If the exchange of Bs is not offered, Kramnik shall play 53.Rb5 with the unstoppable threat 54.a6+. Kasparov wisely tries to reduce the number of pieces that may support the enemy passed pawn.]

53.Bxe3

[Now things are not so clear after 53.Rb5 Bxb6 54.axb6 g5, while; 53.Rxf7 Bxb6 54.Nd5+ Ka6 leads to a draw straight away.;
Another possibility with reasonable chances of success is 53.Nb5, very similar to Kramnik's actual choice.]

53...Rxe3

[At this point both players must have approached serious time trouble.]

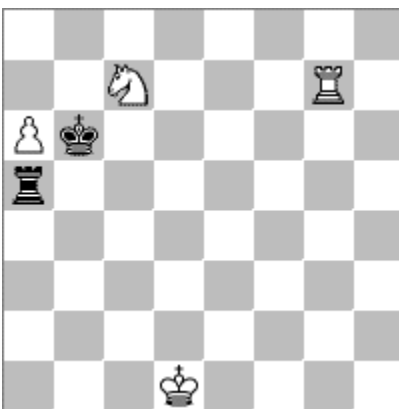
54.Rxf7 Re5

[It is a smart idea to entice the enemy pawn to advance as early as possible. The N will be tied up to its defence, while the R will have in turn to defend the N.]

55.a6+

[I wonder whether Kramnik saw that he could play 55.Nd5+, because after 55...Ka6 56.Nb4+ the pawn is immune (56...Kxa5 57.Nc6+). Black would have to play 56...Kb5 and after 57.Rf4 there would soon follow a5-a6, when all of White's pieces defend each other in a much more harmonious way than in the game. The important practical difference is that in this schema Black can never capture the N (at the same time exchanging Rs), because then the King will be out of the "square" of the a-pawn.
Naturally, there would still be some technical difficulties, most involving the movements of both Kings, but the win would not be in doubt. Now, however, some strange developments occur.]

55...Kb6 56.Rxg7 Ra5



[A completely new position has appeared on the board, one that must have created headaches for the players. I expect both adversaries to have felt very tired by this time, but only one of them wishing adjournments had not been abolished...]

57.Kd2

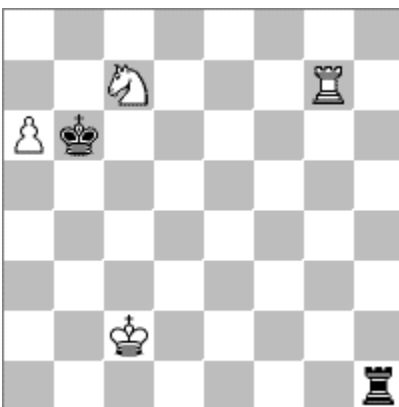
[In comparison to an earlier comment, it is clear White cannot play 57.Kc2 Rc5+ 58.Kb3 Rxc7 when the K+P ending is immediately drawn. Nevertheless, because of zugzwang Kasparov cannot keep the c-file barrier forever.]

57...Ra1

[It seems to me Black should stand still and prevent the enemy King from crossing the 5th rank. Instead, Kasparov prepares himself for a series of distant checks.]

58.Kc2 Rh1

[This is probably not the line of most resistance. Kasparov could not hold both the a-file and the 5th rank, but now he offers his opponent a serious chance to end the game swiftly and convincingly.]



59.Kb2

[But Kramnik does not want to take advantage of such an opportunity and thus Kasparov's perseverance under incredible pressure is rewarded. He could have played 59.Rg8 Ra1 (the N cannot be taken because of 60.a7)]

and now 60.Nd5+ (the last move of the second time control) Kc5 (or 60...Ka7 61.Nb4 and the N again supports the pawn from behind) 61.Rg5 when Black cannot avoid the appropriate restructuring of the enemy pieces (obviously 61...Rxa6 is unplayable because of 62.Nc7+). Meanwhile, an interesting side variation resulting favourably for Black is 60.Rc8 (instead of 60.Nd5+) 60...Ra2+ 61.Kb3 Ra5 62.Kb4 Ra1 63.Nd5+ Ka7 (of course, not 63...Kxa6 64.Ra8+ Kb7 65.Rxa1) 64.Kb5 Ra5+ (the surprise, because 64...Rxa6 fails to 65.Rc7+) 65.Kc4 (65.Kxa5 is stalemate!) 65...Rxa6 and the undesirable pawnless ending appears on the board.]

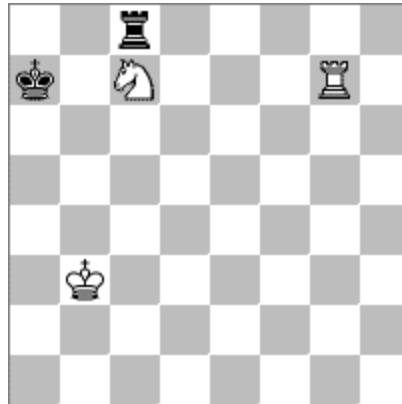
59...Rh8

[Suddenly Kasparov's R finds itself at the right place at the right time for the first time in the game.]

60.Kb3 Rc8

[According to the match rules, at this point both players receive 30 extra minutes immediately after the 60th move. They also receive a 10 second increment from now on, but it is too little too late for Kramnik.]

61.a7 Kxa7



[I had this endgame back in 1996 (my last really active year), but failed to win it against a player of near-master strength. Even though I knew Kasparov himself had won it earlier in the year against J.Polgar in Spain, my opponent found it quite easy to defend accurately. There are very few winning positions, most of which involve a badly cornered King and a defending R unable to check from a distance. If such a position does not arrive by force after simplification, the weaker side can avoid it without much trouble.

I suspect Kramnik continued more because he needed to adjust his thoughts to the fact that he had missed a great opportunity to assume an almost decisive lead, than in the hope that he may win the position.]

62.Kb4 Kb6 63.Nd5+ Ka6 64.Rg6+ Kb7 65.Kb5 Rc1 66.Rg2 Kc8 67.Rg7 Kd8 68.Nf6

[The defending King has been pushed to the edge of the board, but nothing more can be achieved. With just a little accuracy by Kasparov, all that Kramnik can achieve is rotation of the position around different sides of the

board.

A most important factor is that the attacking King cannot establish fruitful coordination with both his other pieces.]

68...Rc7 69.Rg5 Rf7 70.Nd5 Kd7 71.Rg6 Rf1 72.Kc5 Rc1+ 73.Kd4 Rd1+ 74.Ke5

[This was a game that could make or break a World Champion. Kramnik managed to push Kasparov around, but failed to pass an important test for a title holder: accuracy in the endgame. Although the challenger should be fully credited with achieving a winning ending by subtle means in an unassuming position, Kasparov's resilience is at least equally admirable. On the other hand, it seems almost unthinkable that Karpov in his better days could ever fail to win if he got the position after 56.Rxg7 (or slide to just that from a position earlier in the game, for that matter).

Kramnik's reaction in the next game will be crucial. It is important that Game 5 is scheduled for the following day and therefore he does not have enough time to recover from the psychological shock of having missed such an opportunity. On the other hand, will the real Kasparov please stand up and enter the stage?] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Kasparov,G (2849) - Kramnik,V (2770) [A34] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (5), 15.10.2000

[The match seems to be approaching a serious crisis in the competitive sense. Kramnik is not only leading by 1 point, he has also dominated the first quarter of the match in purely chess terms. He has never been seriously threatened, while his classic strategy "win with White, draw with Black" seems to be working perfectly.

The only blemish in his performance up to now has been his failure to capitalize on a winning position in the previous game. Very often in similar situations, the player who missed a winning opportunity ends up losing the next battle. Coupled with the fact that Kasparov is due White, we should expect a "hot" afternoon.]

1.c4

[Still, this is a surprise to me. Kasparov has used the English Opening on previous occasions and I expected him to play it again at some point in the match, but not when he is behind on the scoreboard.

Most variations of the English are notoriously solid and indicate a "safety first" approach. I thought Kasparov would prefer it towards the end of the match, leading or with equal points but not unwilling to split the point. Since Kramnik is also an expert on the English, I think the Champion's choice is an indication of weakness.

On the other hand, maybe Kasparov is trying to give his opponent a sense of security. If Kramnik feels safe enough, maybe he will overstep the mark and become vulnerable. However, the earlier games of the match indicate excellent balance by the challenger and I still believe Kasparov should use a more energetic approach.

In addition, avoidance of 1.e4 at this point admits temporary defeat in the

theoretical duel on the Ruy Lopez.]

1...c5

[As one might expect, Kramnik chooses the super-solid approach, compared to more asymmetrical systems that occur after 1...e5 . I expect the psychological battle to be fought around which player will move first his d-pawn two squares.

It might be added that the challenger arrived about 3 minutes late for the game, a rather unusual occurrence for him.]

2.Nf3 Nf6 3.g3 d5

[The first serious declaration of the opening. Contrary to what happened in the "Berlin" games, here Kramnik is willing to fight for more space in the centre. His lead allows him to assume a more principled stance, following a classic strategy without overextending.

It should be noted that, for psychological reasons, this move was likely to be played either now or not at all by Kramnik. After 3...Nc6 4.Nc3 d5 5.d4 there occurs one of his favourite variations of the English, in which he has excellent results as ...White! If Kasparov's idea was to have Kramnik play against himself, it has failed in this game.]

4.cxd5

[As a matter of fact, the last encounter Kramnik-Kasparov (Linares 2000) saw 4.d4 . May I mention that their game with reversed colours from the same tournament is extensively analysed in my home page?]

4...Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nc6 6.Nc3



6...g6

[An important decision. A significant alternative is 6...Nc7 , aiming to establish the "Maroczy Bind" with ...e7-e5 and fight for even more space in the centre. In that case Black would like to avoid piece exchanges, while it should be noted that the immediate push;

6...e5 fails against a typical combination: 7.Nxe5 Nxc3 (a necessary intermediate move, since 7...Nxe5 loses a P right away) 8.Bxc6+ (worse is 8.Nxc6 Nxd1 9.Nxd8 , because Black then has an intermediate move of his own, that is 9...Nxf2 , and thus restores material balance) 8...bxc6 9.dxc3 (probably superior to 9.bxc3), when the B pair provides insufficient

compensation.

Kramnik's choice indicates a less ambitious but more solid disposition for this particular game.]

7.O-O Bg7 8.Qa4

[This early Q exit represents a relatively new trend in this variation. Some time ago the continuation 8.Nxd5 Qxd5 9.d3 O-O was much more popular, including the gambit 10.Be3 . Kasparov's idea is to create immediate pressure on Black's queenside and force some concession there regarding the pawn structure.]

8...Nb6

[An unusual move in the opening often deserves another in response. The pin on the a4-e8 diagonal could become unpleasant when combined with pressure on its h1-a8 counterpart, so Kramnik removes a primary target from its exposed post. After 8...Nc7 9.Ne4 it would not be easy to defend the c-pawn without giving something else in return; While the simplistic approach 8...O-O allows 9.Qc4 and consequently forces the exchange 9...Nxc3 10.bxc3 which allows White superior long-term prospects in the centre.]

9.Qb5

[Kasparov seems determined to provoke some complications today, even if they are more of a strategic nature than tactical. The attack on c5 aims to disorganize Black's pieces, before Kramnik manages to consolidate his spatial gains.]



9...Nd7

[Of course, not 9...Qd6 10.Ne4 , but the alternative; 9...c4 should be seriously considered. I suspect Kramnik chose the move in the game in order to avoid any unnecessary transformation of the position to one with clearly asymmetrical pawn distribution (here this becomes possible after 10.b3). The problem with 9...Nd7 is that the N blocks both B and Q, which means it will have to move again for Black to complete his development. At least, the position is sufficiently stable to prevent Kasparov from taking advantage of his time superiority.]

10.d3

[Although Kasparov is White, Kramnik once again managed to get a position without easy pawn breaks by the Champion.]

10...O-O

[The unusual position of the Q cannot be taken advantage of in any direct way. For example, after 10...a6 11.Qa4 (better than 11.Qc4 b5) 11...Nb6 (now 11...b5 fails to 12.Nxb5 Nb6 13.Qe4) , both sides have retracted their moves (Qa4-b5-a4 and ...Nb6-d7-b6) with Black having played the dubious advance ...a7-a6. White then can play either 12.Qh4 or 12.Qa3 Nb4 13.Qa5 , when the threat to the c-pawn becomes annoying once again.]

11.Be3

[Another commital and therefore important decision. Also possible was the more restrained 11.Bd2 , so that after ...Nc6-d4 White can exchange Ns. Kasparov apparently wants to force the issue.]

11...Nd4

[Practically forced. The only serious alternative to save the c-pawn was 11...a6 , whose defects were analysed above, since; 11...Qb6 12.Qxb6 is definitely unattractive.]

12.Bxd4

[The pair of Bs is not such an important asset in this kind of position, because the pawn structures of both armies are inflexible in the centre. Kasparov plans to make the white squares all over a major theater of the battle to come, so exchanging the black-squared B for a N should be profitable.]

12...cxd4 13.Ne4

[Both long diagonals have been blocked. However, here Kasparov enjoys a small but definite advantage: his Ns may move at any moment he considers appropriate, while the Pd4 will stay put no matter what. In return, Black has the more advanced central pawn.]

13...Qb6



[Once again, Kramnik offers the exchange of Qs. The only other way to promote the development of the queenside pieces is 13...Nb6 , a distinctly

inferior alternative. Kasparov's N could then use c5 with impunity, creating storn pressure in combination with the long diagonal and the c-file. Reports say that Kasparov had spent much less time on the clock, a feature welcome to him after the experiences in previous games of the match.]

14.a4

[Kasparov clearly aims to force ...a7-a6 and at the same time gain space on the queenside, but in return relinquishes the possibility of ever controlling b4 with a P. After the immediate 14.Qxb6 Nxb6 15.Rfc1 (now 15.Nc5 is pointless, since Black can again reply 15...Rd8 followed by ...Nb6-d5 and this time ...b7-b6) the one and only solid response is 15...Rd8 (15...Nd5 might prove quite risky after 16.Rc4) , e.g. 16.Rc2 Nd5 17.a3 b6 and Black is well on his way to consolidation.]

14...a6

[Of course, not 14...Qxb5 15.axb5 and White acquires the important advantage of free pressure on the a-file.]

15.Qxb6

[It seems Kasparov spent a lot of time in deciding to follow Kramnik's overall match plan of exchanging Qs. The only serious alternative was 15.Qc4 , when Black cannot play 15...Qxb2 16.Rfb1 Qxe2 17.Ra2 and the Q gets trapped having eaten the poisoned b-pawn. White's pressure would have been at least equally strong with the Qs on, so I must confess I do not fully understand the Champion's choice. Perhaps he wished to give Kramnik some of his own medicine, that is a little torture in a queenless middlegame.]

15...Nxb6 16.a5 Nd5 17.Nc5

[For the time being, occupation of the open file with 17.Rfc1 is quite useless, as there are no invasion squares available. Kasparov correctly tries to impede Black's development instead, at the same time partially opening the long diagonal for his B.]

17...Rd8

[At some point, the N will need some protection. Since Black does not have any constructive plan available, there is no better time like now.]

18.Nd2

Now all of Kasparov's pieces are becoming active and white uncovers the secret weapon: the bishop on g2! The knight can head to c4, threatening to win immediately with Bxd4 then Nb6 forking the rooks. [The N "looks" to b6, justifying Kasparov's choice three moves earlier, but there were some other ideas as well. 18.Ra4 may not prove as effective against 18...b6 , but worth investigating was; 18.Ra3 e5 (18...Rb8 19.Rb3 simply plays into White's hand, e.g. 19...b6 20.axb6 Rxb6 21.Rxb6 Nxb6 22.Ra1; , while no better is 18...b6 19.axb6 Nxb6 20.Rfa1 etc.) 19.Rb3 Ra7 and Black seems much worse than in the game.]

18...Rb8

[Not only protecting the Pb7, but also moving away from the inevitable

threat after Nd2-c4-b6.]

19.Nc4 e6

[Kramnik defends as best as he can, now preparing to challenge the N with ...Bg7-f8.]

20.Rfc1

[The attempt to establish a N on b6 permanently succeeds easily after 20.Na4 , but the continuation 20...Bd7 21.Nab6 Bc6 shows the restricted effectiveness of such a plan.]

20...Bh6

[20...Bf8 appears more consistent, but then White has time for 21.Na4 Bd7 22.Nab6 Nxb6 (no better is 22...Bc6 23.Ne5 , which is why the B cannot leave the closed long diagonal without gain of tempo) 23.Nxb6 , e.g. 23...Bb5 24.Rc7 and Black is deep trouble.]

21.Rcb1

[Of course, not 21.Rc2 Nb4 and the R gets trapped between its own pieces! Nevertheless, abandoning the open file could not make Kasparov happy.]

21...Bf8

[The passive B has accomplished one mission, so now it is redeployed for another.]

22.Nb3 Bg7



[Unlike Kasparov in game 4, Kramnik knows he must remain passive to have any chance of survival. After the seemingly liberating 22...b5 , there would follow 23.axb6 Nxb6 24.Ne5 and 25.Na5 with full domination of the queenside. The Nd5 is Black's most important piece and must stay there to hold the position together.]

23.Bxd5

[A committal decision, after thinking for quite some time. Apparently Kasparov believes he will never be able to lure the N away from its dominating central position, otherwise he would never surrender such a

strong B for it.]

23...Rxd5

[As in his other Black games, Kramnik steers away from double-edged decisions. Here 23...exd5 24.Nb6 Bg4 would offer temporary counterplay against the backward e-pawn, but after 25.Kf1 Re8 26.Re1 Rbd8 27.Ra4 (better than 27.Rac1 Re7 , e.g. 28.Rc5 Bh3+ 29.Kg1 Bg4) 27...Bh3+ 28.Kg1 Bg4 29.Nxd4 Bxd4 30.Rxd4 he would get into some trouble.]

24.Nbd2

[Again Kasparov thought for a long time, despite Kramnik's obvious response. Did he miss something or misevaluated a crucial position? The only important alternative at this point is 24.Nb6 , which Black must respond to with 24...Rb5 (the retreat 24...Rd8 is clearly unattractive after 25.Rc1) . White will continue 25.Nd2 , but after 25...e5 and ...Bc8-e6 Black should not experience any serious difficulties. The main point is that The R stands excellently on b5, for example it protects the e-pawn so that 26.Ndc4 can be neutrilzed with 26...Bf8 and the Nc4 blocks the open file for its own Rs.]

24...e5

[Here Kramnik offered a draw, immediately accepted by Kasparov who had much less time available by now.]

½-½

[Once again, the challenger managed a relatively easy draw with Black. Contrary to my predictions, Kasparov was unable to muster enough energy to hit hard after Kramnik's miss in Game 5, while I cannot help thinking he missed good opportunities for a much greater advantage than he got. It should not be forgotten that this was the first pair of games in consecutive days, which means the World Champion was probably tired, but at least he had the psychological initiative. Now he lost it again and Kramnik remains in the driver's seat.

At least, this way the players give the writers the chance to catch up after the incredible fight of Game 4!]

Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2849) [D27] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (6), 17.10.2000

[NOTE: After the unexpectedly quick draw in Game 7, I thought it possible to revise my earlier notes for Game 6. Since it was a very complicated game and I produced the text less than 3 hours after the game finished, I decided to recheck my analysis and incorporate ideas from other commentators. I kept the basic skeleton intact, but added quite a bit and amended even more. In those cases where I used original ideas or variations by others, I tried to give credit to whom it was due. Those of you who are patient enough, read on! The players gave us a lot to think about for a very long time.

P.S.: This second version was completed around 1:00a.m. (Greek time), Friday, October 20.

Despite Kramnik's failure to win Game 4, Kasparov could not impress with White in the very next encounter and allowed his opponent a precious moment of relaxation. The Challenger has clearly dominated the first part of the match, but at some point the beast in Kasparov is bound to awaken. Meanwhile, the opening of Game 6 should tell us a lot about the players' psychological state.]

1.d4

[By now it should be clear that the experiment with 1.e4 was just a bluff. Kramnik will probably continue with 1.d4 throughout the match, possibly throwing in; 1.Nf3 once, if he ever gets a 2-point lead.]

1...d5 2.c4 dxc4

[Most interesting! Kasparov equally declares that he prepared the Queen's Gambit Accepted as a major opening weapon for the entire match, not as a temporary substitute while the Grunfeld Defence is in the repair shop. He also argues that the opening battle ended satisfactorily for Black in Game 4, despite his later troubles.

On the other hand, he seems to admit that he is not yet ready to continue the Grunfeld debate...]

3.Nf3 e6 4.e3 c5 5.Bxc4 a6 6.O-O Nf6 7.a4

[In Game 4 Kramnik chose 7.dxc5, a safe continuation that allowed him to follow his general match strategy of exchanging Qs and depriving Kasparov of any meaningful pawn breaks. Now he goes for a much sharper approach, showing that he is willing to press for the full point in other ways as well.]



[The double advance of the a-pawn has some distinct advantages and disadvantages: it severely restricts Black's queenside counterplay with ...b7-b5, but cedes the important square b4 to the enemy minor pieces. The latter fact is quite important, because a N can use it to transfer itself to the critical square d5 and also to prevent a "battery" of B and Q on the b1-h7 diagonal. Nevertheless, quite a few top players are willing to play this with White, which means they value its positive aspects more highly.]

7...Nc6 8.Qe2 cxd4 9.Rd1

[A typical tactical trick in this kind of position. After 9.exd4 Nxd4 10.Nxd4 Qxd4 White does not get enough compensation for the central P. If the moves a2-a4 and ...a7-a6 had not been inserted there would be access to the important square b5, but now...

The downside of the R move is that White commits himself to a certain placement of his major pieces for some time to come. Quite often, the side with the isolated d-pawn prefers to post the other R on d1 and use this one on either of the e- or f- files.]

9...Be7 10.exd4



[All standard theory so far, with a typical isolated d-pawn. It is strange to see Kasparov defending this kind of position, but at least here the Qs are much less likely to be exchanged. Also, Kramnik must now use his central superiority to prepare an attack against the King, not his favourite role.]

10...O-O 11.Nc3 Nd5

[The only other way of preventing the breakthrough d4-d5 is 11...Nb4 , but this relinquishes control of e5 too early.]

12.Bb3

[Although the variation 7.a4 became popular after Botvinnik used it in the 1963 World Championship match against Petrosian, one of the most famous clashes in this type of position is Petrosian(!)-Spassky, Moscow (Alekhine Memorial) 1971: 12.Qe4 Ncb4 13.Ne5 Ra7 14.Bb3 Nf6 15.Qh4 b6 16.Qg3 Bb7 17.Bh6 Ne8 18.Rac1 Kh8 19.d5 exd5 20.Be3 Ra8 21.Nc4 Nd6 22.Bxb6 Qb8 23.Na5 Nf5 24.Qxb8 Raxb8 25.Nxb7 Rxb7 26.a5 Bg5 27.Rb1 d4 28.Nd5 Nc6 29.Ba4 Rc8 30.f4 Nce7 31.Rbc1 Rcb8 32.fxg5 Nxd5 33.Bc6 Rxb6 34.axb6 Nde3 35.b7 Nxd1 36.Rxd1 g6 37.g4 Ng7 38.Rxd4 Ne6 39.Rd7 and 1-0.

Kramnik's move is not so easy to explain without going to some depth in the specifics of the position. One of Black's biggest problems when playing against the isolani concerns the development of the white-squared B and consequently the Ra8. Moving the B on d7 keeps e6 sufficiently defended, but interferes with control of d5. Spassky (as did many after him) tried using the long diagonal, but ...b7-b6 weakens the square c6. In that case it

is often useful for White to exchange on d5, because Black is forced to recapture with the pawn and the c-file opens up new possibilities exactly because c6 is undefended (an excellent example of this strategy is the famous Botvinnik-Alekhine game from the historic A.V.R.O. 1938 event). It is evident that such a course of events would be even more favorable for White if he could exchange N for N rather than B for N (as Botvinnik had done) and in addition at the crucial moment he did not have to lose time by retreating the B. Therefore it makes perfect sense to make this "prophylactic" move now, when Black cannot do something eminently constructive.]

12...Re8



[12...b6 allows White to assume the initiative with 13.Nxd5 exd5 14.Ne5 etc.]

13.h4

[A typical ...Kasparov sacrifice from Kramnik. The World Champion has used such pawn offers ever since his younger days to launch dangerous attacks. I remember being present in one of his less successful attempts against the Hungarian GM Groszpeter (the game ended in a draw) in one of his most successful tournaments (under-26 Olympiad, Graz 1981, where he scored +8=2).

But it should be noted that Kramnik himself used a similar approach in his earlier encounter against Hubner in this year's Dortmund tournament. This is definitely a game that introduces a new phase of the match.

A secondary advantage of the pawn advance is that White no longer has to worry about back-rank ideas.

Two important alternatives that have been used at a high level are 13.Ne5 Nxc3 14.bxc3 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Qc7 16.Rd3 Bd7 17.Rh3 g6 18.Bh6 Red8 19.Qe3 Qc5 20.Qf4 Bc6 21.Re1 b5 with Black eventually winning in Naumkin-Sadler, Oostende 1992, and; 13.Bd2 Bf6 14.Qe4 Ncb4 15.Ne5 b6 16.Qf3 Bb7 17.Ne4 Qe7 18.Rac1 Rac8 with a balanced position in Gelfand-Ivanchuk, Monaco 2000.;

Finally, two other options worth mentioning are 13.Ne4 ; and 13.Qe4 .]

13...Ncb4

[It is easy to calculate that the pawn cannot be taken immediately with 13...Bxh4 14.Nxh4 Qxh4 (14...Nxc3 reverts to the main line) because of 15.Bxd5 , but the intermediate capture; 13...Nxc3 14.bxc3 Bxh4 15.Nxh4 Qxh4 also runs into serious difficulties after 16.Rd3 . White's pieces are very easy to coordinate, while the Black King lacks sufficient protection. It is highly unlikely that either player went to any depth in the resulting position.]

14.h5 b6

[14...h6 would be a definite strategic mistake at this point, because it would weaken the g6 square and the b1-h7 diagonal, besides creating without sufficient reason a juicy target of the h-pawn itself.; Another typical option is 14...Bd7 15.Ne5 Bc6 , avoiding some queenside weaknesses but temporarily closing the c-file for counterplay.]

15.Ne5

[White cannot do without this move at some point or other. Sometimes sacrifices on f7 are threatened, while partial control of c6 and d7 should not be underestimated. Exchanging this N is hardly ever desirable for Black, as it may be replaced by a pawn that controls both d6 and f6, crucial squares that are often used by defending pieces.]

15...Bb7



[The battlelines have been clearly drawn, with White dominating the centre and Black finding good squares for all his pieces. Kramnik's black-squared B has trouble locating an active spot, but Kasparov has been reduced once more to pure piece manouvring without pawn breaks.]

16.a5

[A noteworthy advance at the edge of the board, with obvious intentions regarding the centre. Kramnik wishes to secure c5 for the Nc3, in order to increase his space advantage and repress counterplay via the c-file. On the other hand, the pawn itself may become weak and require some protection. GM Shipov, in his notes for the KasparovChess Internet site, also mentions 16.Qg4 and the attractive continuation 16...Rc8 17.Bd2 Nf6 18.Bxe6 , however he points out himself that it leads only to a draw after 18...Nxg4

19.Nxf7 Qxd4 20.Ng5+ Kh8 (of course, not 20...Kf8 21.Nxh7#) 21.Nf7+ etc. White is not yet ready for an all-out kingside attack, so Kramnik prefers to build up small advantages along the entire front.]

16...b5

[The capture 16...bxa5 is both very anti-positional and tactically deficient: 17.Ba4 Rf8 18.h6 (an important intermediate move, since after 18.Nd7 Re8 19.Nc5 Bc6 the typical shot 20.Nxe6 fails to conclude the battle because of 20...Qd7 and now either 21.Nf4 Nxc3 22.bxc3 Bxa4 or 21.Bxc6 Qxc6 allow Black to defend against all immediate threats) 18...g6 19.Nd7 Re8 20.Qe5 Nf6 21.Nc5 Bc6 22.Nxe6 wins material for White.;

However, Kramnik's second Lautier mentions that the move of the game came as surprise to the Challenger, who expected something like 16...Rc8 , leaving the b-pawn in its place and accelerating Black's queenside counterplay.]

17.h6

[One more important decision with long-term consequences that are not at all easy to evaluate. Kramnik fixes the pawn structure on the kingside, which means he can no longer dream of ever using the g-file and may also have a vulnerable weakness in most endgames (on h5 the pawn would be much less accessible to enemy pieces). On the other hand, he creates significant weaknesses on g7 and f6, which allow him to conjure up a variety of threats.

In any case, this style of play, combining operations on very distant parts of the board reminds one of Alekhine and one of his admirers during his formative period, namely ...Gary Kasparov!]

17...g6 18.Ne4

[Now it is Kasparov's turn to decide on a plan that will cover several moves in the near future. Any rearrangement of his pieces is likely to change the course of the game permanently.]



18...Nc7

[An unexpected retreat by the World Champion, of the best placed black piece, and one that received strong criticism by Lautier. The truth is that the N performs admirable defensive functions from c7: it defends e6 and a6, while it frees the white-square B. Now that White has committed several pawns on black squares, an exchange of white-square Bs is especially

welcome to Black. The only serious defect of the N move is that it temporarily blocks the Q's access to a5, thus freeing the Ra1 to join the attack, possibly via the 3rd rank.

In any case, one would expect more a move like 18...Rc8 searching for counterplay on the only completely open file.;

Another interesting "backward" move is 18...Nc6 , but the threat to the a-pawn is nothing to write home about. After 19.Qf3 (of course, not 19.Nc5 Nxd4) 19...Rf8 (the capture 19...Nxe5 emphasizes too many weaknesses on black squares after 20.dxe5) 20.Bxd5 exd5 21.Nxc6 Bxc6 22.Nc5 Bf6 23.Bf4 Re8 24.Qg3 White enjoys better control of the black squares.;

Just for the record, the routine 18...Nf6 , again planning to exchange minor pieces, would constitute a typical mistake, because of the equally routine 19.Nxf7 Kxf7 20.Ng5+ etc.]

19.Nc5

[Shipov offers the variation 19.Qf3 Rf8 20.Nf6+ Bxf6 21.Qxb7 Ncd5 (in order to prevent the Q's escape) 22.Bd2 Rb8 23.Qd7 Bxe5 24.Qxd8 Bh2+ (avoiding the capture of the B by the P) 25.Kxh2 Rfxd8 as leading to a balanced position, but it seems to me the Ns are at least equal to the Bs in such a fight with almost no open diagonals and absolutely no pawn breaks. Furthermore, any exchange of minor pieces would expose several weaknesses in White's camp, so one of the most important advantages of the B pair would be non-existent.;

Lautier, having consulted with his boss for the event, prefers 19.Bd2 , e.g. 19...Bd5 (he also claims 19...Qxd4 20.Ng5 is too dangerous to contemplate) 20.Bxd5 Ncxd5 21.Rac1 f6 (but he does not even bother analysing 21...Qxa5 , presumably because of 22.Nc6 Qb6 23.Nxe7+ Rxe7 24.Bxb4 Nxb4 25.Nf6+ etc.) 22.Bxb4 Nxb4 23.Nc6 Nxc6 24.Rxc6 Bf8 (of course, not 24...Qd5 25.Rd6) 25.d5 with a powerful initiative.]

19...Bd5

[Changing the blockader was a favourite Nimzowitsch strategy. Here it aims at removing from the board one of the most dangerous enemy pieces. The end result is a distinct superiority of both armies on squares of the color that is opposite to their name. Such a distribution in control of space is very typical after a transitional phase of many games.]

20.Ra3

[This possibility demonstrates clearly why White's black-squared B does not really have to be developed (it is worth noting the conceptual similarity with Kramnik's 15...h5 in Game 1, as well as 17...Rg8 and 19...Rg6 in Game 3). The overall coordination of the pieces is a much more important consideration than the position of any single piece.

In this particular situation, the deciding factor will be whether Kasparov manages to keep enough tension in the centre, in order to prevent a full-scale kingside attack.]

20...Nc6



[Kasparov is clearly aiming for the exchange of several pieces, in order to relieve the pressure. His tactical threat ...Nxd4 is incidental, but forces Kramnik to make a decision.

Another possibility was 20...Qd6 , but after 21.Bxd5 Black must be careful not to reply 21...Nbx d5 (best seems 21...exd5) 22.Rf3 Bf6 (or 22...Rf8 23.Ncd7) 23.Ne4 Qe7 24.Bg5 Bxg5 25.Rxf7 Qd8 26.Rg7+ Kf8 27.Nd7+ etc. Also interesting was;

20...Bf6 , but it leaves c5 completely in enemy hands.

Around this point, both players had close to half an hour of thinking time available until the 40th move.]

21.Bxd5

[The sally 21.Nb7 proves inadequate after 21...Qc8 22.Bxd5 (or 22.Nxc6 Bxc6) 22...Nxd5 23.Rf3 Nxe5 (worse is 23...Qxb7 24.Rxf7 Nxe5 25.Qxe5 Bf6 26.Rxb7 Bxe5 27.dxe5 etc.) 24.Qxe5 f6 25.Qe4 Qxb7 26.Qxe6+ Kh8 (26...Kf8 seems also sufficient) 27.Qf7 Rg8 and the remaining White pieces lack coordination to create any real threats.;

Another move that could be considered, however, is Shipov's suggestion 21.Nxc6 Bxc6 22.Bc2 to open the 3rd rank for the R, e.g. 22...Bf6 23.Bf4 Nd5 24.Be5 , but Black can insert 22...Nd5 with satisfactory play.]

21...Qxd5 22.Ncd7

[Probably better than the immediate 22.Nxc6 Qxc6 , while after; 22.Ned7 Rad8 White is not prepared to answer both 23...Rxd7 and 23...Nxd4.]

22...Rad8

[The blunder 22...Bxa3 permits a very photogenic "family" check (23.Nf6+), while;

22...Nxd4 leads to immediate disaster after 23.Qg4 . Finally, the attempt to win a piece by;

22...f6 proves extremely dangerous after Kramnik's planned 23.Rad3 (Shipov offers only 23.Nxg6 hxg6 24.Nb6 Qd6 -not 24...Qd8 25.Qe4- 25.Qg4 Kh7 26.Bf4 with a very strong attack in return for a small material investment by White.) , e.g. 23...fxe5 24.dxe5 Qc4 (or 24...Qa2 25.Rc3) 25.Nb6 and White will soon win material. The main variation is mentioned in Lautier's notes.]

23.Nxc6

[Here 23.Rc3 may run into trouble, if after 23...Rxd7 White avoids the

pointless continuation 24.Nxc6 Bd6 and goes for the more tempting 24.Nxd7 (of course, not 24.Rxc6 f6) 24...Qxd7 25.Qc2 : a N vs. R dance follows with 25...Nd5 (or 25...Nb4 26.Rxc7 Qd8 27.Qc3 Nd5 , a remarkable echo in a real game, if only through simple move transposition) 26.Rxc6 Nb4 27.Rc7 Qd8 (not 27...Qd6 28.Qc5) 28.Qc3 Nd5 and Black wins material.; It should also be mentioned that 23.Nb6 loses immediately to 23...Nxd4 etc. Reports have it that at this point Kramnik had only 9 minutes left against 22 for Kasparov.]

23...Rxd7

[Of course, not 23...Qxc6 24.Qe5 etc., a typical variation that justifies the earlier advance 17.h6, at a moment when time was not pressing.]

24.Nxe7+

[The alternative 24.Ne5 is proven much inferior by 24...Bxa3 25.Nxd7 Qxd7 26.bxa3 Nd5 , as Black will soon get full control of the c-file and cover all his black-square weaknesses with a timely ...f7-f6.]

24...Rxe7

[This is the only correct capture, as the possibility ...e6-e5 mentioned a little later requires two major pieces on the d-file.]



[After massive exchanges, a completely new situation has arisen on the board. Black has managed to remove many threatening enemy minor pieces and left on the board only the "bad" black-squared B, but the h-pawn could become extremely dangerous and the c-file should not be sneered at. Kasparov will probably play ...f7-f6 and ...Kg8-f7 at some point, but there are other considerations as well.

Perhaps the two most salient features of the battle to come are the fight for control of the white squares and the importance of the c-file.]

25.Rc3

[The desirable 25.Bf4 , intending to post the B on e5, fails against 25...e5 26.Bg5 Re6 etc. obviously Kasparov had calculated this important detail a long time ago.]

25...f6

[I have to admit I did not expect this to come so quickly. Since however

Black does not have anything more constructive, why not?

A typical misguided attempt is 25...Qa2 when removing the Q from the main battlefield to hunt for a measly pawn is punished immediately with 26.Qe5 Ne8 27.Rc8 and the mate threat can only be answered by 27...f6 , which pawn is simply taken.]

26.Be3

[The first move by the B offers the guidelines for the next stage of the game. White no longer needs major pieces to guard the isolani and will double on the c-file, but he may suffer on the white squares.]

26...Kf7 27.Rdc1 Qb7

[Unfortunately for the World Champion, it is too early for 27...Qe4 , as 28.Rc6 ties up the rest of his pieces in defensive functions. After the text move, all of Black's five pieces are gathered on the 7th rank, a rather unusual occurrence.]

28.Rc5

[Further infiltration into the enemy camp with 28.Rc6 is useless, since by 28...Nd5 and ...Rd7-c7 the intruder will be either exchanged or expelled.]

28...Nd5

[Once again, the blockader has been changed. The only problem is that Black has only one excellent square for many pieces, so that the one occupying d5 hinders the mobility of the rest.]

29.Qf3

[As the immediate entry 29.Rc8 achieves nothing after 29...Re8 30.Rxe8 Kxe8 , Kramnik prefers to create positional threats like 30.Bf4 and 30.Bg5. The drawback to the Q move is that the enemy N is not pinned at all.]

29...Nb4

[Kasparov would probably like to try here 29...Rc7 , in an attempt to exchange Rs under circumstances more favourable than in the game, but after 30.Bg5 the weakness of f6 may become too important.]

30.Qe2



30...Rc7

[The retreat 30...Nd5 would constitute an indirect draw offer, which Kramnik might have well taken at this point (although Lautier claims his player had not made up his mind yet). Obviously Kasparov has higher aspirations now.;

At first I suspected he could have chosen the more energetic 30...Qe4 , now that the N already controls c6 and 31.Rc8 (any attempt to evict the Q from her dominating position with 31.f3 has two clear-cut disadvantages: it weakens the King and White's major pieces can no longer use the square f3, a fact whose significance will soon become apparent) should not really be feared as claimed in my earlier comments: 31...Re8 32.Rxe8 (or 32.R1c7 Ke7) 32...Kxe8 33.Rc8+ Ke7 34.Rh8 Kd6 and the King will assist his R in challenging the c-file.

This note was written before I had a chance to look at Lautier's comments, who mentions a tactical shot I had previously missed: in the midst of my main variation, White can play 34.d5 creating the lethal threat 35.Bc5+, so Black has to settle for 33...Rd8 instead and accept a draw by repetition after 34.Rc7 Rd7 35.Rc8+ etc.

The inevitable conclusion is that Kasparov was never better in this phase of the game, despite any false appearance due to his superior minor piece.]

31.Bf4

[Practically forcing the following exchange, thus changing radically the character of the game once again.]

31...Rxc5

[It might seem wiser to avoid the R exchange with 31...Rcd7 , but then White has the tactical shot 32.Be5 , e.g. 32...Nd5 (of course, not 32...fxe5 33.Qxe5 with a winning attack) 33.Qf3 when Black is tied hand and foot, and also facing ideas like 34.Rc8.]

32.dxc5

[The alternative capture 32.Rxc5 leads to different kinds of problems: 32...Nd5 (not 32...Qd7 33.Qd2 Nd5 34.Bg3 Re8 35.Qc1 and Black remains tied up) 33.Bg3 (33.Bd6 simply wastes a tempo after 33...Rd7 34.Bg3 Ne7) 33...Rd7 and 34...Ne7 followed by ...Ne7-f5. Now, at least, Kramnik has a passed P that restricts the mobility of the enemy pieces. In addition, he can work on the d-file, a much more promising prospect than its neighbour.]

32...e5

[This is absolutely necessary, otherwise White will play Bf4-d6 and establish a bind deep inside enemy lines. The problem with this advance is that the N loses its support for the excellent square d5, while also weakening the a2-g8 diagonal.]



33.Qd2

[The only way to avoid ceding full control of the white squares. After the game, Kasparov admitted he had overlooked this move when he shunned 30...Nd5. Once again, the World Champion proves vulnerable by underestimating his opponent's attacking possibilities.]

33...Nc6

[Kasparov would like to play 33...Nd5 and continue with 34...Qc6, but 34.c6 comes right in time.;

Naturally, the exchange 33...exf4 34.Qxb4 would be most unattractive in view of the threats 35.Qxf4 and 35.c6, for example 34...Qc7 35.c6 Re6 36.Qc5 (or 36.Qd4) followed by 37.Qb6.;

Lautier claims this was the correct moment to play 33...Qe4 , as after 34.Be3 Nc6 35.f3 Qf5 life goes on without any immediate problems. Kramnik's assistant believes the World Champion panicked because he had not foreseen his opponent's previous move. If that is the case, once more the reaction to a mistake proves once again to have more serious consequences than the original mistake itself.]

34.Qd5+

[This diagonal could become quite troublesome for Kasparov. As soon as he begins challenging control of some black squares, he loses his dominance on the white ones.]

34...Kf8

[Another option (suggested by Lautier) is 34...Re6 , but after 35.Be3 Qc7 36.Rd1 White dominates the open file completely. Then the capture of the a-pawn is extremely risky, but worthy of further investigation.]

35.Be3 Qd7

[Unfortunately for Kasparov, 35...Rd7 fails against 36.Qe6 , with Kramnik once again expanding his domain to include significant squares of the lighter complexion.]

36.Qf3

[The exchange 36.Qxd7 Rxd7 would lead to an endgame vastly superior for Black, despite the passed P: superior minor piece, more active King,

exposed enemy Ps, etc. Similarly,; 36.Qd6 Kf7 makes it hard for White to improve his position, since now 37.Rd1 allows the exchange of the Qs and instant equalization (37...Qxd6 38.Rxd6 Re6 39.Rd7+ Re7 40.Rd6 Re6 etc.).]

36...Kf7

[Perhaps only at this point in the game Kasparov misses his one and only chance to get a slight overall advantage with 36...Qe6 (suggested by Lautier) 37.Rd1 e4 38.Qf4 g5 39.Qd6 (worse seems 39.Qg3 Rd7) 39...Kf7 when his position appears quite solid.]

37.Rd1

[Kasparov is good at challenging the squares with color opposite to his opponent's B, but Kramnik is excellent at occupying open files.]



37...e4

[Forced, otherwise the enemy R invades d6 with a vengeance, possibly followed by 39.Qd5(+). The only other option 37...Nd4 cannot lead to a happy conclusion after 38.Bxd4 exd4 39.Qa8 etc.]

38.Qe2

[Another option is 38.Rxd7 exf3 39.Rd6 , but now it was Kramnik who wished to avoid the draw after 39...Re6 40.Rd7+ Re7 and further repetition of moves.]

38...Qf5

[38...Qc8 cannot be better, as now at least the square d5 is partially controlled. In any case, with best play by both sides, the very same position ought to be reached. A typical wrong path for Black then is 39.Rd6 Ne5 40.Qd1 Nd3 41.Qb3+ etc.]

39.Rd6 Re6 40.Rd7+

[A typical trick in time trouble, gaining moves to reach the 40th move control without making any committal decisions.]

40...Re7 41.Rd6 Re6

[Now Kramnik has enough thinking time to contemplate the merits of his position and choose whether to continue the battle or not. In particular, he

must determine whether Kasparov has enough chess time available to transfer his N to d3.]

42.Qd1



[The challenger goes for it! This must have been a particularly unpleasant moment for Kasparov, who surely knows he has made some mistake in his opponent's time trouble. Now he has to defend against both a possible endgame and threats to his King.]

42...g5

[An inspired idea, despite its obvious risks. The problem with it is that it was played extremely quickly and that there is a much better alternative.

42...Nb4 loses much faster with 43.Rd7+ (or 43.Qb3 Nd3 44.Rxa6) 43...Re7 44.Qb3+ (even better than 44.Rxe7+ Kxe7 45.Qd6+ Ke8 46.c6 Nd3 47.c7 Qd7 48.Qxf6 Qxc7 49.Qh8+ Kd7 50.Qxh7+ Kc8 51.Qxc7+ Kxc7 52.h7) ; , while typical of the problems faced by Kasparov is the variation 42...Nxa5 43.Rd7+ Re7 44.Rxe7+ Kxe7 45.Qd6+ Ke8 (or 45...Kf7 46.Qc7+ and 47.Qxa5) 46.Qxa6 etc.;

Finally, after 42...Ne5 43.Qd5 Ke7 (N moves like 43...Nd3 run into 44.Rd7+ Kf8 45.Qb7) White can play 44.Bd4 and invasion to the enemy camp is imminent.;

The absolutely best defence is 42...Rxd6 43.Qxd6 (the capture 43.cxd6 can create problems only for White after 43...Ke6 , e.g. 44.d7 Ke7 etc.) 43...Qe6 (also possible seems 43...Qc8 44.Bd4 Qe6 45.Qc7+ Ne7) 44.Qc7+ Ne7 when it is very difficult for White to make significant progress. For example, after 45.Bf4 Qd5 (or 45...Qg4) there is no sense in playing 46.Bd6 as it allows immediate perpetual check with 46...Qd1+ 47.Kh2 Qh5+ 48.Kg3 Qg5+ and so on.]

43.Qh5+

[Kramnik wishes to repeat moves in order to gain thinking time, but in doing so overlooks an important defensive resource. He ought to have preferred 43.Rd7+ right away.]

43...Ke7

[Practically forced, as after 43...Kf8 44.g4 (44.Qd1 proves ineffective against 44...Ke8) 44...Qe5 White has the unusual combinative resource

45.Bf4 gxf4 46.Qxe5 Rxe5 47.Rxf6+ Ke8 48.Rxc6 with a won R ending.]

44.Qd1



44...Kf7

[Initially I thought this was forced, because of the threat 45.Rd7+, but at least I was in good company. Kasparov again responded very quickly and missed 44...Ke8 45.Rd7 Re7 46.Rxe7+ Nxe7 47.Qd6 Qd7, when once again the perpetual check mechanism comes to his rescue.

It is very strange for a player of this calibre not to appreciate the seriousness of the danger and refrain from investigating every possible defensive resource.]

45.Rd7+

[Now Kramnik avoids repetition with 45.Qh5+ quite wisely. However, if he wants to play on, he must sacrifice the h-pawn and hope that his evaluation of the resulting position is correct. In such situations it is practically impossible to calculate everything in advance.]

45...Kg6

[The King will be exposed to new dangers here, but there was no alternative. 45...Ne7 leads to a quick loss because of the continuation 46.c6 Rxc6 47.Qh5+ Qg6 (or 47...Ke6 48.Qe8) 48.Qxg6+ hxg6 49.h7 Rc8 50.Bc5, while;

45...Re7 proves also unsuccessful after 46.Qb3+ Kg6 (not 46...Qe6 47.Qxe6+ Kxe6 48.Rd6+; , while 46...Kf8 fails to 47.Rd6 Rc7 48.Bd4 Nxd4 49.Rd8+ Ke7 50.Qg8 and there is no adequate defence, for example 50...Ne2+ 51.Kf1 Ng3+ 52.Ke1 etc.) 47.Qg8+ Kh5 (or now 47...Kxh6 48.Qf8+) 48.Rxe7 Nxe7 49.Qf7+ Ng6 50.Qxh7, e.g. 50...Qg4 51.Qg7 Nh4 52.Qf7+ Kxh6 53.Qxf6+ Kh5 (53...Kh7 54.g3 allows White to parry the counterattack without much difficulty, since the King escapes to freedom in the variation 54...Qd1+ 55.Kh2 Nf3+ 56.Kh3) 54.Qh8+ (but here 54.g3 even leads to mate with 54...Qd1+) 54...Kg6 55.Qe8+ Kh6 56.g3 Nf3+ (again 56...Qd1+ 57.Kh2 is useless for Black) 57.Kf1 (as is 57.Kg2 Nh4+ for White) 57...Qh3+ 58.Ke2 Ng1+ 59.Kd2 Nf3+ 60.Kc3 and, finally, the King finds refuge in the open queenside space.

The main line also stems from GM Shipov's analysis on the KasparovChess

Internet site.]

46.Rg7+

[Although this looks like a very strong move, Shipov examines 46.Rc7 as well. The threat 47.Qd7 does not allow Black much room for choice, so that after 46...Qe5 (or 46...Ne5 47.Qd8 Kxh6 48.Qc8 cannot be easily provided against, e.g. 48...Kg6 49.Qg8+ Kh6 50.Rxh7+ Qxh7 51.Qxe6 etc.; , while 46...Kxh6 47.Qd7 Ne7 48.c6 should also lose, for example 48...Qd5 49.b4 to be followed by 50.Bc5) 47.Rg7+ Kxh6 48.Qd7 White just manages to avoid the obstruction of the 7th rank by the R. Then 48...Ne7 (as mentioned, 48...Re7 fails against 49.Rxe7 Nxe7 50.Bd4 Qd5 51.Qd6 etc, while; 48...Qf5 49.Rxh7+ Qxh7 50.Qxe6 is obviously no better) 49.Rf7 threatens both 50.c6 and 50.Bd4 with decisive consequences. The only line that offers some resistance is 49...Kg6 50.Qe8 Kf5 , but again after 51.Qh8 Ng6 52.Qxh7 Re7 (the only way to prevent 53.Rg7) 53.Rxe7 Qxe7 54.g4+ White ends up winning material.

Naturally, one cannot figure out all these complications with limited thinking time, so Kramnik's choice is much more practical.]

46...Kxh6

[Usually it is Kasparov who sacrifices material for the initiative. In particular, during his 1990 match against Karpov he sacrificed in 22 of the 24 games. Kramnik seems to have found a way to neutralize the World Champion's ambition, in a way nobody has ever done before.]

47.Qd7



[Kramnik must have foreseen and evaluated this position when he avoided the repetition of moves earlier, counting a lot on the passed P and his control of the most significant lines. Black's forces are completely tied up, but it is not at all easy to tell in advance how to make significant progress with White.]

47...Re5

[Immediately losing is 47...Ne5 48.Rxh7+ Qxh7 49.Qxe6 , when the double threat against f6 and a6 produces a swift decision.]

48.Qf7

[The attempt 48.Qc7 Re6 proves insufficient, but worth mentioning is; 48.Qxf5 Rxf5 49.Rc7 , when the only defence is 49...Nxa5 50.b4 Nc4 51.Rd7 Re5 (but not 51...Nxe3 52.fxe3 Re5 53.Rd6 and Black is still in danger) 52.c6 Re6 when Black only appears to be out of the woods.

A likely continuation then is 53.c7 Rc6 54.Ba7 (threatening 55.Bb8 Nb6 56.Rd8 and 57.Ba7 again) 54...a5 55.bxa5 (of course, not 55.Bb8 axb4 56.Rd8 b3 57.c8Q Rxc8 58.Rxc8 b2 and suddenly it is Black who wins the race) 55...Nxa5 (55...b4 56.a6 -but not 56.Bb6 b3 57.Kf1 Na3- 56...Ne5 57.Re7 Ng6 58.Rf7 Ne5 59.Rxf6+ etc.) 56.Bb8 b4 (White should win after 56...Nc4 57.Rd8 Nb6 58.Ba7 Rxc7 59.Bxb6 , since the enemy Ps do not cooperate well, albeit with some difficulty) 57.Rd6 (once again, 57.Rd8 b3 58.c8Q Rxc8 59.Rxc8 b2 fails by just one tempo) 57...Rc1+ 58.Kh2 b3 (otherwise the R gets behind the passed P too quickly, e.g. 58...Kg6 59.Rb6 b3 60.Rb5 etc.) 59.Rxf6+ Kg7 (or 59...Kh5) 60.Rb6 Rc5 (the only way to prevent 61.Rb5, but...) 61.Rb5 (anyway!) 61...Rxb5 62.c8Q b2 63.Qd7+ (or 63.Qe8+, if the King stands on h5).

This is a variation impossible to analyse over the board to its very end, as is the game continuation.

Therefore, one should use judgement as well as calculation to choose among them. I am sure Kramnik preferred 48.Qf7 because he believed he could maintain more control over the proceedings, while after 48.Qxf5 both sides have to follow a very narrow, precise path. One tempo may decide the outcome either way, while in the game there are still some alternative winning methods.]

48...Rd5



[This is the fourth black piece that lands on d5 (one N and one R never made it, will the King ever?). The apparently desirable retreat 48...Re7 loses to 49.Bxg5+ fxg5 50.Qxf5 , a motif that will dominate the following notes, while no better is;

48...Nd8 49.Rxh7+ Qxh7 50.Qxf6+ and 51.Qxe5, as well as; 48...Nxa5 49.Bd4 Re6 50.Rxh7+ etc.

Now Kasparov is very close to consolidation, since the arrival of the N to e5 will provide him with the dangerous counterthreat of a check on f3.]

49.Kh1

[This excellent move was found by my student Haralambos Theoharis and registered in my computer before Kramnik played it (or, should I say, before we received it through the Net). The point is that after 49.Kh2 Black can play 49...Ne5 without fearing 50.Bxg5+ (of course, not 50.Qxd5 Ng4+ and 51...Qxd5) 50...fxg5 51.Qxf5 , as in this position there is the countercombination 51...Nf3+ 52.Qxf3 exf3 with reasonable chances of survival.;

Another interesting possibility is 49.Rxh7+ Qxh7 50.Qxd5 Qc7 (or 50...Nxa5 51.Qd8) 51.Qxe4 with a position very similar to the game. Black then cannot play 51...Nxa5 , since by 52.Qe6 (also good seems 52.f4 , another one of Shipov's suggestions) 52...Qc6 53.Qf7 White threatens both 54.Bd4 and the even stronger idea 54.f4 followed by 55.f5. Also losing is 51...Kg7 52.Qe6, but strong resistance can be offered with 51...Qd7, so Kramnik's choice is once again superior.;

Finally, it is worth mentioning that 49.Rg8 is not as successful after 49...Rd7 50.Bxg5+ (or 50.Rxg5 Rxh7 51.Rxf5+ Kg6 and Black keeps fighting) 50...Qxg5 51.Qxd7 Qxg8 52.Qxc6 Qg5 with the double threat of perpetual check by 53...Qc1+ and 53...e3.;

But the story does not end here. After I had my notes "hung" on the Net, Lautier produced another candidate move I completely missed, that is 49.b4 . His variations run 49...Nxb4 (compared to the game, the variation 49...Nd8 50.Rxh7+ Qxh7 51.Qxd5 does not allow 51...Kg6 with check and Black loses by force, while after; 49...Ne5 50.Bxg5+ fxg5 51.Qxf5 Nf3+ 52.gxf3 Rxh7 53.Ra7 is now winning, since the c-pawn stands protected) 50.Kh2 Nc6 (an important tempo has been won) 51.g4 . My only consolation is that Kramnik also missed this brilliant win.]

49...Nd8

[Kramnik's idea was that after 49...Rd1+ 50.Kh2 Rd5 (or any other meaningless "pass" by Kasparov) 51.g4 the pawn cannot be taken with check.;

Lautier also mentions the trap 49...b4 50.g4 (a mistake now) 50...Rd1+ 51.Kh2 Nd4 (but not 51...Ne5 52.Bxg5+ fxg5 53.Qxf5 Nf3+ 54.Qxf3 exf3 55.Ra7) 52.f4 (naturally White has to avoid yet one more kind of perpetual check which occurs after 52.gxf5 Nf3+ etc., while; 52.Bxd4 Qf4+ even gets him mated) 52...Nf3+ (obviously not 52...Qxg4 53.Rxh7#) 53.Kg3 Rg1+ 54.Kf2 Rxg4 55.Qf8 Rg2+ (or 55...Kh5 56.Qf7+ with White this time forcing a repetition, since 56...Kh4 57.Rxh7+ is unplayable) 56.Kxg2 Qg4+ 57.Kf1 (not 57.Kf2 Qg1+ 58.Ke2 Qe1#) 57...Qh3+ 58.Ke2 Qg2+ 59.Bf2 (or 59.Kd1 Qf1+ 60.Kc2 Qd3+) 59...Ng1+ 60.Ke1 (the B should not be taken with check, while 60.Ke3 Qf3+ 61.Kd4 ends in disaster with 61...Qd3#) 60...Nf3+ , which however he provides for by the simple retort 50.b3, when Black is called upon to find another useful move!]

50.Rxh7+

[Now a position very similar to the note on the possibility 49.Rxh7+ is reached, except that the N has retreated to d8. Nevertheless, Shipov considers this move inferior and proposes instead 50.Qf8 (now that the R can no longer return to d8). Unusually so, there is an omission in his analysis: after 50...Kh5 (not 50...Rd1+ 51.Kh2 Ne6 52.Rxg5+ -of course,

not 52.Bxg5+ Qxg5- 52...Nxf8 53.Rxf5+ Kg6 54.c6 -Lautier stops here, claiming the line is not sufficient for White- 54...Rd8 55.Rd5 Rc8 56.Rd6 Kf7 57.c7 Rxc7 58.Rxa6 with a winning endgame) 51.Qh8 he examines only 51...h6 52.Qe8+ Kh4 53.Rg6 h5 54.Rh6 Rd1+ (or 54...Qg4 55.g3+ Kh3 56.Rxh5+ Qxh5 57.Qxh5#) 55.Kh2 Qe5+ (check) 56.g3+ (and countercheck) 56...Kg4 57.Qxh5+ Kf5 when the very best is 58.Qh3+ g4 59.Qh5+ (a switchback) 59...Ke6 60.Qe8+ Kd5 (60...Kf5 61.Rh5#) 61.Qxd8+ and 62.Qxd1, but fails to mention the simple retreat 51...Kh6 to which White's only winning move is 52.g4.]

50...Qxh7 51.Qxd5



51...Kg6+

[The best practical chance. After 51...Qc7 52.Qd6 (also winning is 52.Qxe4 Qxa5 53.Qe7 Kg6 54.Bd4) 52...Qxd6 53.cxd6 there is no defence against 54.Bb6 and the advance of the passed pawn.]

52.Kg1 Qc7 53.Qg8+

[Now the black King is one file closer and 53.Qd6 fails to win after 53...Qxd6 54.cxd6 Kf7 etc. On the other hand,; 53.Qxe4+ should lead to a safe win without much trouble. Kramnik takes the pawn after inserting a couple of checks, in order to reach the second time control (move 60) with fewer changes in the position.]

53...Kf5

[Not much real choice here, as after 53...Kh6 54.Qf8+ (or 54.Qh8+) 54...Kg6 Kramnik would play 55.Bd4 with a relatively easy win, e.g. 55...Nf7 56.Qg8+ Kf5 57.Qh7+ etc.]

54.Qd5+ Kg6 55.Qxe4+ Kg7



[Yet another stage in this adventurous game has been reached. White's extra pawn should suffice to win, but there are still quite a few technical difficulties. Most of them concern the enemy N, who can create a blockade on c6 while counterattacking either on the queen side or the centre. The correct winning plan in similar situations is to combine threats on both wings, which here necessitates keeping the Qs on board. The second weakness that Kramnik must aim at is obviously the enemy f-pawn, practically blockaded on a square with the same color as his B. This indicates a schema with the white Q on d5, e6 or f5 and the B on the a1-h8 diagonal. Since White is better centralized, there is no reason why such a formation cannot be achieved.]

56.Qa8

[Wrong direction. The general philosophy of such positions is that if decentralization wins, so does centralization. The opposite is not necessarily the case.

The concepts presented immediately after the diagram suggest a continuation like 56.Qd5 (also proposed by Lautier) 56...Nc6 57.Bd4 Kg6 (57...Nxd4 58.Qxd4 leads to a technically winning Q ending) 58.Bc3 with the unanswerable threat 59.Qe6 (then 58...b4 is unplayable because of 59.Bxb4 Nxb4 60.Qe4+).;

It should be mentioned that 56.Qf5 is less effective, as then Black may struggle on with 56...Nc6 (but not 56...Qc6 57.Bd4 Nf7 58.b4 with complete zugzwang on a relatively open board).]

56...Qd7

[In a practical game most grandmasters would adopt Kasparov's choice, but Shipov, obviously armed with a computer, also considers the materialistic 56...Qxa5 : 57.Qc8 (57.b4 Qa1+ 58.Kh2 Qd1; 57.g3 Qe1+ 58.Kg2 Qd1 59.Qxa6 Qd3 60.Qc8 Nf7) 57...Nf7 58.c6 Qa1+ 59.Kh2 Qb1 60.c7 Qh7+ 61.Qh3 (61.Kg3 leads to immediate perpetual after 61...Qh4+ 62.Kf3 Ne5+ 63.Ke2 Qc4+ 64.Kd2 -but not 64.Ke1 Qc2 when White even loses!- 64...Qd3+ 65.Kc1 Qf1+ 66.Kc2 Qd3+ etc.) 61...Nd6 and Black continues to offer stiff resistance.]

57.Kh2

[It seems Kramnik had counted a lot on this precaution. In my original notes I considered the immediate capture 57.Qxa6 also possible: 57...Qd1+ 58.Kh2 Qh5+ 59.Kg3 Qh4+ 60.Kf3 and the King eventually escapes the

checks. However, Lautier revealed the resource 59...f5, after which the white King finds itself in lots of trouble.;

In any case 57.g3 should be avoided, as after 57...Qd1+ 58.Kg2 Qd3 the a-pawn is immune because of the perpetual again.]

57...Qd3

[It is probable that the Challenger missed this counterattacking retort. Quite consistently, Kasparov pins his hopes on the white squares and plans to use even h7.]



58.g3

[Against 58.Qxa6 Shipov analyses 58...Qh7+ 59.Kg3 (59.Kg1 Qb1+) 59...Qh4+ 60.Kf3 Qh5+ (it should be noted that Lautier proposes the much simpler 60...f5 61.g3 Qe4+ 62.Ke2 f4 suggesting they use different computer programs or, at least one of them, none at all!) 61.Ke4 Qg6+ 62.Kd4 (not 62.Kd5 Qd3+ 63.Bd4 Qf5+ 64.Kd6 Qe6+ 65.Kc7 Qxa6) 62...Qc2 (a move very difficult to spot in advance, with the unexpected threat 63...Qc4#) 63.b3 (of course, not 63.Qxb5 Ne6+ 64.Kd5 Nc7+) 63...Qxb3 64.Ke4 f5+ (64...Qc4+ is unnecessarily more complicated) 65.Kxf5 Qd5+ 66.Kg4 Qxg2+ 67.Kf5 (or here 67.Kh5 Qh3+ 68.Kxg5 Ne6+) 67...Qd5+ and a different means of perpetual check has been established. Luring the N away from e6 with; 58.Qa7+ Nf7 and only now 59.Qxa6 achieves the same result after 59...Qh7+ 60.Kg3 Qh4+ 61.Kf3 Ne5+ 62.Ke2 Qc4+ 63.Kd2 Qd3+ 64.Kc1 Qf1+ as above.

The move played creates escape squares for the King, but also some weaknesses. The Champion appeared quite relieved when it appeared on the board.]

58...Nf7

[Black's queenside is crumbling, so Kasparov must stake everything on a counterattack using the white squares.]

59.Qb7

[It is too late now. After 59.Qxa6 Black forces immediate perpetual with 59...Qh7+ etc.] 59...Kg6 [Unpins the N, but now the square h7 is no longer available to the Q, so...]

60.Qxa6

[...but still Black gets enough counterplay.] 60...Ne5 [Time pressure is over and the Q has wandered too far away from her King.]

61.Qa8

[The Q returns to the crucial diagonal, a pawn up and two tempi down. Meanwhile Kasparov has taken over the centre and will not give Kramnik another chance.]

61...Ng4+

[Black in turn cannot afford to lose any time. For example, should Kasparov decide to get fancy by creating a mating net with 61...g4, Kramnik would win easily: 62.Qg8+ Kf5 (or 62...Kh5 63.Qe8+ etc.) 63.Qh7+ Ng6 64.Qh5+ Ke6 65.Qxg4+ and the battle is over. Equally unsuccessful is; 61...Qe2 62.Qe4+ Kg7 63.Kg2 Nd3 64.g4 and the white King has enough space to avoid the perpetual (a variation given by Shipov).]

62.Kh3 Qf5



[This is exactly what Kasparov hoped for and Kramnik allowed. Q+N now combine admirably against the white King, which means the Challenger must make some significant concession.]

63.Qe8+

[In my original analysis, I noted that I did not quite understand why Kramnik avoided 63.Kg2 Nxe3+ 64.fxe3 Qc2+ 65.Kh3 Qf5+ 66.g4 Qxc5 67.Qe4+, adding the comment that, although the result is not clear-cut yet, there are still good winning chances for White. Since at this point an extra half hour had been added to his clock, there should be no problem calculating such a line.

Well, well... Now I have to admit I was completely wrong, since in the middle of that line it is Black who wins: by playing 65...g4+ Kasparov would deliver mate! This is the kind of error you may commit over the board when you are as bad a player as I am, or annotating a game in a hurry when not using a chessplaying computer program. Sorry!

(Tim Krabbe has an excellent chapter on similar disasters in practical Q endings, in his most entertaining book "Chess Curiosities". I wonder how

many more examples he would have to include if he used wrong annotations as well.)

The inevitable conclusion is that Kramnik's last winning chance was before the second time control and now he was wise to take the draw. One should know when to cut one's losses short...]

63...Kh6 64.Qh8+

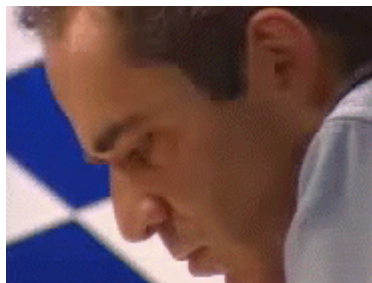
[To keep trying for the win with 64.Kg2 cannot bear any positive result after 64...Qd5+ 65.f3 Ne5 . Kramnik decides he has missed another golden opportunity to double his wins and settles for a perpetual of his own.]

64...Kg6 65.Qe8+ Kh6 66.Qh8+

[A multi-stage struggle that proved nerve-wrecking, even for experienced Kasparov followers, with two exciting time-trouble phases and highly interesting mistakes. Perhaps the Champion's most ardent fan, mother Klara, could not handle the tension and left the playing hall when everyone was convinced Kramnik had another point in the bag.

After this second failure to win a won position, Kramnik must show exceptional psychological qualities in order to play at full strength in Game 7. This time he has a resting day available, but maybe the realization of what he has done will come to haunt him worse for that reason. Sometimes playing another game takes your mind away from the past in a most effective way. On the other hand, he seemed to keep both his composure and sense of humor intact during the press conference right after the game. When the players were asked whether they would prefer the match to be 16 or 24 games long, Kramnik replied: "As for me, I would prefer 6"!

Kasparov once again demonstrated immense practical defensive skills and was brimming with energy at the press conference immediately after the game, but still he cannot be happy with his performance. He badly needs to take the initiative for once and this means something like a Ruy Lopez or NimzoIndian in the next game. He must not necessarily win Game 7 (although that would be nice, too), but he should definitely change the tone of the match.] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$



Kasparov,G (2849) - Kramnik,V (2770) [A32] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (7), 19.10.2000

[With one third of the match fully completed, it is easy to see that Kramnik has presented overall better play. Kasparov has failed to win a game yet, while he has not introduced anything new in the openings. This extremely unusual state of affairs, coupled with the fact that the challenger has missed clear wins in two more games, means that Kasparov must face the possibility of losing his title when still in his prime.

This is a situation that should energize Kasparov to the fullest. There is still a 10-game match for him to win and he is distinguished from other players by his ability to muster strength at the most critical moments. This was confirmed both times he found himself with his back on the wall, refusing to go down for the second time. At these moments, Kramnik failed to deliver the decisive blow, despite the fact that he had proven himself at least equal to the Champion up to then. For game 7 Kasparov should choose 1.e4 or 1.d4, avoiding sidelines and looking for total war on the chessboard. This is perhaps the ideal moment to hit hard with a theoretical novelty in one of Kramnik's favourite systems.

If 1.e4 is played, Kramnik will probably continue with 1...e5, but, as I suggested in my introductory notes to Game 3, sooner or later he should switch to another variation.

If Kasparov plays 1.d4, Kramnik should probably go for the NimzoIndian/Queen's Indian complex. He lost an important game with the Nimzo in the last round of Linares in 1997, which gave Kasparov clear first place, but he cannot avoid a theoretical clash forever. The challenger's opening strategy has succeeded marvellously up to now, however it will not work for a full 16 games. Kasparov is the world's best player in creating complications and undoubtedly he will. Therefore, Kramnik can win the match as a whole only if he can beat the Champion at his own game.

When all is said and theorized, however, one fact remains: Kramnik still leads by one point.]

1.c4

[So much for my predictions! However, since the rest of the game and Kasparov's early draw offer suggest there is a game outside the chessboard going on, there is no point in making any serious comments. Could the Champion be ill?]

1...c5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Nc3 e6 6.g3 Qc7 7.Qd3 Nc6 8.Nxc6 dxc6 9.Bg2 e5 10.O-O Be6 11.Na4

[The position is balanced, but this has not prevented these two in the past from producing exciting battles. Whatever the reason for this quick draw, Kramnik should try harder with White on Saturday.

As for myself, I will try to produce a revision of my comments on Game 6, since it was very interesting and I must have made several mistakes. My plan is to incorporate other annotators' comments as well, giving credit where it is due, of course.

Meanwhile, I feel quite disappointed and almost frustrated...] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$



Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2849) [E32] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (8), 21.10.2000

[After yesterday's amazingly quick draw, predictions for Game 8 became practically impossible. Either the World Champion was beginning to really crack, or he was preparing a serious counterattack. His choice of opening will most certainly demonstrate his intentions: has he resigned himself to the role of "second fiddle" or are we going to see a new phase of the match introduced?]

1.d4

[In earlier games I mentioned that this is likely to be Kramnik's choice for the duration of the event. He may use 1.Nf3 in Game 14 or 16 if he is leading, or a little earlier if he acquires a 2-point advantage, but maybe not even then.]

1...Nf6

[The real Kasparov is back! Games 4 and 6 saw 1...d5 with a Queen's Gambit Accepted that does not suit his style at all. Despite achieving reasonable positions out of the opening and eventually two draws, it was clear that he was outplayed and losing in both encounters. The text expresses the World Champion's counterattacking temperament perfectly.]

2.c4 e6

[The war goes on! Kasparov shuns 2...g6, which could lead to either the King's Indian Defence or the Grunfeld, admitting that he is not ready yet to resume the theoretical argument on the latter, which he lost in Game 2. On the other hand, introducing a third defensive system against 1.d4, he indicates that his preparation for the match has been as extensive as ever.]

3.Nc3

[Kramnik also demonstrates his intention to enter a full-blown fight. Although 3.Nf3 is a most serious alternative, at this point it would show limited ambitions for this specific game.]

3...Bb4

[Now, this is an opening that suits a World Champion! 3...d5 takes us back

to the Queen's Gambit and would, frankly, disappoint me. Kasparov hasn't played the NimzoIndian in an official game since his debacle against Ivan Sokolov in Wijk aan Zee 1999. This was the last game he lost in regular time controls, therefore today's choice also displays a show of confidence. Black's basic idea in the NimzoIndian Defence is to control the central square e4, a point normally threatened or occupied much more easily by White. Thus it is not really a «Defence», but a counterattack with which Black stakes claim on the side of the board beyond the imaginary dividing line that separates the 4th and 5th ranks.

Nimzowitsch's practical goal was to create important strategic asymmetries in the position, both in terms of zones of influence and pawn structure. Furthermore, the likely exchange of the black black-square B for the Nc3 will lead to a confrontation between quantitatively equivalent but qualitatively different minor pieces.

Briefly, the NimzoIndian Defence is an opening in which the conflict of values dominates the struggle, so that both sides obtain winning chances. Its attraction is based on the fact that it combines dynamism with relative solidity, since Black develops speedily and obtains reasonable counterplay without creating obvious weaknesses (as, for example, in the Benoni Defence) or abandoning the centre completely (as in the King's Indian). It makes sense that the names of all the top players since 1920, without exception, have been associated with the NimzoIndian Defence at some point, while it has never been considered a «suspect» opening.]

4.Qc2

[Kramnik continues with a most principled approach, which he has adopted repeatedly in the past in the past. Other loyal followers of the move are ex-World Champion Karpov and Kasparov himself.

One of the most fundamental issues inherent to the NimzoIndian Defence is the value of the doubled Ps that occur after ...Bb4xNc3(+). They most certainly strengthen White's control of the centre, so that they provide solid foundation for any kingside attack, but they may also constitute a weakness because of their limited mobility, thus becoming suitable targets and demanding the commitment of several white pieces to defensive functions. Similarly, the B pair may either find open diagonals on which the true power of the clerics is displayed or remain restricted by Ps and display undesirable passivity.

Kramnik's choice prevents the doubling of the Ps and in addition provides valuable support to the critical square e4, at least temporarily.]

4...0-0

[The most flexible approach, keeping all options open. Apparently Kasparov has realized that his opponent wishes to impose on him positions without meaningful pawn breaks and for once chooses a line that provides him with many.]

5.a3

[5.e4 has also been tried, but is not conceptually consistent. As I predicted in my comments to earlier games, Kramnik will have to challenge the World Champion in a Main Line theoretical battle at some point.]

5...Bxc3+ 6.Qxc3

[So here is the famous NimzoIndian B pair, often a lethal weapon. Now Black has to make a choice regarding his pawn structure.]

6...b6

[Kasparov continues in the most fashionable way, developing the B towards e4 and delaying his commitment regarding the placement of his central Ps.]

7.Bg5

[This pin is essential, if White wishes to exert any serious pressure against the centre. Besides, it is consistent with the fight for e4.]

7...Bb7

[In similar situations, the combinative unpinning of the N with 7...Ne4 comes into consideration. Here it proves plainly bad after 8.Bxd8 Nxc3 9.Bxc7 .] 8.f3 [Another move typical of this system. If White does not use his f-pawn to challenge the critical square e4, Black will eventually assume its control. Its negative aspect is that the N no longer has access to its natural developing square and must necessarily prefer e2 or h3. The former puts the N in the way of other white pieces (the B or sometimes a R), while the latter decentralizes it. Nevertheless, Ng1-h3 is a common choice in this variation, because the N can be redeployed to f2 and support e4. In addition, it provides temporary support to the B on g5, rendering the unpinning combinations quite useless.]

8...h6

[The idea of this advance is to force the B on a square that it will be unprotected for sure. In this way, the tactical tricks ...Nf6-e4 or ...Nf6-d5 may become more realistic, especially as the B could be taken with check in some variations.]

9.Bh4



9...d5

[Finally, an important bit of information is revealed! Black may also use another classic P formation in the centre, that is preferring exclusively the black squares c5, d6 and e5, since their B has been exchanged. The c-pawn always lands on c5 in this variation, sooner or later, therefore Kasparov signals that he intends to open up the centre completely, betting

on his superior development and against Kramnik's B pair.]

10.e3 Nbd7 11.cxd5

[Another important signal: Kramnik feels extremely comfortable with his match strategy of exchanging Qs at an early stage of the battle. This time, however, Kasparov retains a reasonable chance of achieving several pawn breaks.]

11...Nxd5

[The capture 11...exd5 is quite playable, of course, but then the centre would be much more stable than in the game continuation.]

12.Bxd8

[Kramnik has his wish, but so does Kasparov. In this battle of wills, the winner shall also gain a psychological advantage.]

12...Nxc3 13.Bh4

[Once again, Kramnik adopts the most principled approach. 13.bxc3 would be a cop-out to a completely balanced endgame, wasting his White as Kasparov did on Thursday.;

It is worth noting that behind the apparently quiet form of the position there are many small tactical details hidden. For example, it is significant that after the intermediate capture 13.Bxc7 Black has the N fork 13...Nd5 and after the (also intermediate) threat 14.Bd6 there is the threat of another N fork with 14...Nxe3 . In all subvariations Black keeps material equality and achieves the separation of White's Ps without any compensation.]

13...Nd5 14.Bf2

[Retaining the B on the h4-d8 diagonal makes sense, in order to prevent an enemy R from using the d-file, but this means the d-pawn would have to be supported by the King (14.e4 Ne3 allows the exchange of the white-square B and thus leads to yet another completely equal ending). However, after both;

14.Kd2 and; 14.Kf2 there would follow 14...c5 and it is not at all easy for White to prevent both the isolation of the d-pawn and penetration down the c-file (the latter, especially, is a most annoying prospect).]

14...c5

[There is nothing new under the sun these days... In their famous 24-game blitz match (Moscow 1998) Kasparov and Kramnik had already encountered this position, only the World Champion was then White! In the 20th game, the younger player chose 14...f5 and reached an equal ending after 15.Bb5 c6 16.Bd3 c5 17.Ne2 Rac8 18.0-0 cxd4 19.Nxd4 Ne5 20.Be2 Nc4 21.Rfc1 Ncxe3 22.Nxe6 Rfe8 23.Rxc8 Bxc8 24.Nd4 Bd7 25.Bxe3 Nxe3 26.Rc1 Rd8 27.Kf2 f4 28.g3 Nf5 29.Nxf5 Bxf5 30.Ke1 fxg3 31.hxg3 Rd7 , which however he proceeded to lose: 32.b4 Kf7 33.Rc4 g5 34.f4 Be6 35.Rc6 Re7 36.Kf2 gxf4 37.gxf4 Kg7 38.Bd3 Bd5 39.Rd6 Bb3 40.f5 Rf7 41.Rg6+ Kf8 42.Rxh6 Ke7 43.Ke3 Rf6 44.Rh7+ Rf7 45.Rh4 Kd6 46.Kd4 Rf6 47.Rg4 Bf7 48.Rg7 a5 49.b5 a4 50.Be4 Be8 51.Rb7 Rf8 52.Rxb6+ Kc7 53.Re6 Bxb5 54.Ke5 Bd7 55.Re7 Kd8 56.f6 Re8 57.Kd6 Bb5 58.Bf5 Rf8 59.f7 Rh8 60.Be6 Ba6 61.Ra7 Bc8 62.Bxc8 and, finally, 1-0.

However entertaining, blitz games cannot be considered theoretically useful

and the advance ...f7-f5 at this point should be judged on pure merit: it weakens both the square e5 and the e-pawn itself, while its prevention of e2-e4 is not of equal value.]

15.Bb5

[Development with a threat, how can anybody wish for more? But...]



15...Rfd8

[At long last, Kasparov introduces an innovation in the match, at least regarding serious games with regular time controls. In Linares 1999, against the very same Kramnik, the English grandmaster Adams preferred 15...N5f6. This allowed White to consolidate with 16.Ne2 a6 17.Ba4 cxd4 18.Nxd4 Nc5 19.Bc2 and then the attempt to assume the initiative with 19...e5 backfired after 20.Nf5 Rfd8 21.Bh4 Nd3+ 22.Ke2 Nxb2 23.Rhb1 Nc4 24.Bd3 Nd6 25.Nxh6+ Kf8 26.Bxf6 gxf6 27.Rxb6 Bc8 28.Rc1 Be6 29.Rcc6 Ke7 30.e4 Nb5 31.Ke3 Nxa3 32.Nf5+ Kf8 33.Bxa6 Rd1 34.Be2 Ra1 35.Rb2 Rd8 36.h4 Nb1 37.Kf2 Nd2 38.Rd6 and 1-0.

Kasparov's choice is much more dynamic, as it promotes Black's development instead of retreating a centralized piece. There are problems with the c-pawn, of course, as it remains with seemingly inadequate protection, but these can be dealt with by tactical means. All in all, a typical Kasparovian approach, except it has been used by ...Kramnik before!]

16.e4 Nc7

[This is the true innovation! In the 16th game of the above-mentioned match, Kramnik played 16...Ne7 instead. The continuation was 17.Ne2 (after 17.Bxd7 Rxd7 18.dxc5 bxc5 19.Bxc5 Black achieves an immediate draw with 19...Rc8 20.Bxe7 Rxe7 21.Rd1 Rc2 22.Rd2 Rxd2 23.Kxd2 Rd7+ 24.Kc2 Rc7+) 17...Bc6 18.Ba6 b5 19.a4 bxa4 20.dxc5 Ne5 21.Nd4 Rab8 22.Bg3 f6 23.O-O-O Kf7 24.f4 Ng4 25.f5 e5 26.Bc4+ Ke8 27.Nxc6 Nxc6 28.Rxd8+ Kxd8 29.Re1 h5 30.h3 Nh6 31.Rd1+ Kc7 32.Rd6 Na5 33.Bd5 Nb3+ 34.Kd1 Nd4 35.Ra6 Rxb2 36.Rxa7+ Kb8 37.Rxa4 Rxc2 38.Rxd4 Rxc3 39.Rb4+ Kc8 40.c6 Nxf5 41.Be6+ Kc7 42.exf5 Kxc6 43.h4 Kc5 44.Rb7 Rg4 45.Ke2 Kc6 46.Ra7 Kb6 47.Rd7 Kc5 48.Ke3 Kc6 49.Rf7 e4 50.Kd4 Kb6 51.Bd5 Rxh4 52.Rxc7 Rh2 53.Bxe4 Rd2+ 54.Ke3 Rd6 55.Rh7 Kc5 56.Rxh5 Ra6 57.Rh2 Ra3+ 58.Kf4 Ra4 59.Rc2+ Kd6 60.Rd2+ Ke7 61.Rd5 and 1-0. Clearly, the transition phase between the opening and the queenless

middlegame was not a success for Black.

Kasparov's choice creates an immediate threat and forces the development of events in a much more direct fashion.]

17.Bxd7

[The retreat 17.Be2 loses valuable time. After 17...cxd4 18.Bxd4 Rac8 White might start feeling somewhat uncomfortable.]

17...Rxd7 18.dxc5

[The immediate 18.Ne2 should also be considered. In many tense situations, it is more profitable to let the opponent make an exchange that initiate the process, the main reason being that recapturing activates a piece or pawn in return for the one exchanged.]

However, in this particular case Kramnik had no choice. The capture 18...cxd4 will be followed by 19...Rad8 and possibly ...Bb7-a6 with a tremendous initiative. The only way to justify White's delay in development is to create some asymmetry and the loss of the B pair means this asymmetry should be searched for in the pawn structure.]

18...f5

[But here comes a nasty surprise: a capture against Kasparov is not necessarily replied to with a recapture! This should be compared with Kramnik's own 14...f5 in the 20th game of the 1998 blitz match. That was a shot into thin air, while now Black hits on a hard target.]



[At long last, the World Champion is in his element. He has managed three out of the four possible NimzoIndian pawn breaks, that is ...d7-d5, ...c7-d5 and ...f7-f5, the last one with a pawn sacrifice. He is an expert at creating an unexpected crisis, usually offering material in exchange for superior mobility. Now Kramnik must play very carefully to maintain the balance, which means that for once his opening strategy has failed.]

19.cxb6

[Practically forced. The capture 19.exf5 would be completely inappropriate, as the opening of the e-file would provide Black with extra avenues of attack.]

19...axb6

[Apparently all of this was included in Kasparov's preparation, since he had consumed only 5 minutes up to this point.]

20.Ne2

[Once again, the capture 20.exf5 leads to early disaster, for example after 20...exf5 21.Ne2 Re8 22.Rd1 Rde7 23.Rd2 Ba6 etc. The alternative; 20.Rd1 is not much better, as with 20...Rxd1+ 21.Kxd1 fxe4 22.fxe4 Bxe4 23.Nf3 Nd5 Black would get a strong initiative for free. The idea ...Nd5-f4 in particular, either before or after ...b6-b5, could prove extremely dangerous. Kramnik senses the danger and correctly decides to limit the damage by completing his kingside development. Finally, after; 20.Bxb6 fxe4 21.fxe4 Bxe4 22.Nf3 Nd5 the very same idea 23...Nf4 will prove troublesome to White.]

20...fxe4 21.fxe4 Bxe4

[Kasparov removes from the board a pawn that limits the mobility of his minor pieces, a decision probably made at "home". The possibility 21...Ba6 certainly looks attractive, since it delays White's castling, but there is a simple answer: 22.Rd1 (not, however, 22.Bxb6 Rb8 ; 22.Nc3 b5; or 22.h4 Rb8 , all of which play into Black's hands) 22...Rxd1+ 23.Kxd1 Rd8+ 24.Ke1 when the exchange of Rs has eased the pressure considerably and the threat to the black b-pawn becomes real.]

22.0-0

[At last! Black has the initiative, but no permanent damage has been inflicted. Still, another viable option seems to be 22.Nc3 Bxg2 23.Rg1 and 24.Bxb6. The only problem with it is that White will have to surrender his B for the enemy N after 24...Rb8, so that the game will go on for a very long time. On the other hand, the queenside passed Ps should provide sufficient compensation.]

22...Rd2 23.Nc3 Bb7



[The pressure against g2 means that the B is pinned on f2. Almost every Black piece is superior to its counterpart and Kramnik's queenside pawns are in danger. The best hope for splitting the point lies in an ending with

opposite-colour Bs.]

24.b4

[This does not appeal to me, as an exchange of Rs is indicated to ease the pressure. After 24.Rad1 (the correct R) it would be risky beyond reason for Black to essay 24...Rxb2 25.Rd7 Rf8 (this would be quite strong with the R still on a1) 26.Rxc7 (even better than 26.Nd1 Rc2 , which would be the indicated continuation if the Ra1 had been chosen for d1 on move 24) 26...Ba6 27.Nd1 Rd2 28.Re1 , when White wins without much difficulty. Therefore, the correct answer is 24...Rad8 and after 25.Rxd2 Rxd2 defending the position ought to be much easier for Kramnik.]

24...Rf8

[Now the threat of 25...Ba6 forces Kramnik's hand.]

25.Ra2

[Once again, practically forced. It is too late for 25.Rad1 , since 25...Rc2 creates unsolvable problems: 26.Rd3 (or 26.Rc1 Rxf2) 26...Ba6 27.b5 Nxb5 etc. At this point Kramnik reportedly had about 30 minutes left of thinking time, while Kasparov was ahead almost one hour.]

25...Rxa2 26.Nxa2 Nd5

[As the R exchange was achieved with loss of time and the decentralization of the N, Kasparov grabs the chance to create the threat 27...Nf4. Kramnik again has no real choice.]

27.Bd4

[As will become obvious from the game continuation, 27.Bg3 is significantly worse. It is important to keep contact with the weak enemy b-pawn, while it is also crucial to create counterthreats against g7.]

27...Ra8

[Kasparov does not have anything better than attacking the pawn that was weakened by White's 24th move.]

28.Nc3

[This choice is not very easy to explain. 28.Rf3 looks simpler, even though Black has the tactical shot 28...Nxb4 . In that case, Kramnik could continue 29.Rg3 (29.axb4 naturally not 29...Bxf3 30.gxf3 Rxa2; , while after 29.Nxb4 Bxf3 30.gxf3 Rxa3 Black keeps winning chances) 29...Nxa2 30.Rxg7+ Kf8 31.Rxb7 with an easy draw.]

28...Nxc3 29.Bxc3 Rxa3



[Kasparov has an extra passed P, but the opposite-color Bs make it difficult to use it. The Black King cannot be activated without a R exchange, therefore a "zoning" defence should be possible.]

30.Bd4 b5 31.Rf4 Rd3

[31...Ra2 achieves nothing, because of the simple retreat 32.Rf2 . Here Kramnik had about 15 minutes left to reach move 40, with Kasparov still leading by almost an hour.] 32.Rg4 [A useful move, forcing further pawn exchanges and thus reducing Black's potential targets.]

32...g5 33.h4 Kf7 34.hxg5 hxg5 35.Kf2 Rd2+



36.Ke3

[The last important move in the game. Kramnik willingly sacrifices a second pawn, in the knowledge that the opposite-color B endgame is an easy technical draw: the superior side has realistic chances only if the extra pawns have some distance between them, making it more difficult for the defence to combine the functions of B and K.]

36...Rxg2 37.Rxg2 Bxg2 38.Be5

[A rather uneventful game, but not entirely devoid of interest. Although Kramnik still leads on the scoreboard, his advantage remains minimal and for the first time in the match Kasparov had absolutely no problems with Black. He seems ready to assume the initiative and finally put some pressure on the Challenger. Next week will probably be the most critical of

the match. Can Kramnik withstand the change of wind? Will he try to even prevent it from happening at all? In any case, one gets the feeling that the real battle for the crown is on for good...

38.Be5 There is no way for Black to make any progress, e.g. 38...Kg6 39.Bc7 Kf5 40.Kd4 Kg4 41.Ke3 Kh3 42.Kf2 and the passed pawns are stopped along the same diagonal without even trying. Therefore...] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$



Kasparov,G (2849) - Kramnik,V (2770) [C67] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (9), 22.10.2000

[This is going to be a crucial game, not least because the match enters its second half. Kramnik has clearly dominated the struggle up to now, giving his opponent only one easy day when Kasparov was Black. On the other hand, the World Champion has not yet seriously threatened to win even one game and failed badly to capitalize on his own Whites.

He showed amazing resilience when he found himself in lost positions in Games 4 and 6, but not enough creativity to win the match. Still, I find it hard to believe Kasparov has not enough energy to win at least 2 out of 16 encounters and so cannot believe Kramnik will become Champion without winning at least one more game.

As in Kasparov's Championship match against Anand in 1995, I expect the coming third week to be the most critical. If Kramnik manages to pass it without significant damage in points or in his theoretical armoury, then he will still be there with a chance.]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6

[Kramnik insists on his archaic weapon, in its updated form, of course. At the end of the match, we will be able to tell whether his choice was really inspired or mistaken. For the time being, however, the Berlin Defence experiment has been a complete success.]

4.O-O Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.Nc3



9...h6

[Kramnik is the first to vary from Games 1 and 3, in which he played 9...Bd7 instead of the useful "for all weather" text. He obviously wishes to avoid any specific preparation by Kasparov's team, but equally obviously believes in the general soundness of the system. I am quite amazed the World Champion insists on queenless middlegames, a battlefield where Kramnik has proven himself an accomplished master. I suspect he needs to prove to himself that he is the top player for any type of position, meaning he is forced to accept the challenge. Otherwise, he would have to base his game plan only on the treatment of a specific position that may or may not occur, an unlikely event and a prospect easily sidestepped by his opponent. Nevertheless, I received reports that Kasparov thought for some time here.]

10.Rd1+

[And he decides to change the tune somewhat. 10.b3 would probably lead to positions similar to the earlier games with this variation, but Kasparov seemed determined to locate some important defect in Kramnik's move order. therefore, he opts to deprive him of his chosen plan to evacuate the King towards the queenside.

As mentioned in my earlier notes, however, this also means that the R is committed too early on a file not too promising. The other R will need some time before it is developed, therefore Black should not feel very threatened at this point.]

10...Ke8

[Of course, Kramnik does not fall for the typical trap 10...Bd7 11.g4 (much better than immediately 11.e6 fxe6 12.Ne5 , when 12...Nd6 defends successfully, e.g. 13.Rxd6 Bxd6 14.Nf7+ Ke7 15.Nxh8 Rxh8 and Black may even start to think about winning) 11...Ne7 12.e6 fxe6 13.Ne5 with unavoidable serious loss of material.]

11.h3

[This move I commended very highly in Game 1, but Kasparov failed to follow up with the plan of general advance of the kingside pawns and shunned it completely in Game 3. Now that he returns to it, what can I say?]

11...a5

[This slow approach demonstrates how solid Kramnik thinks his position is. The main point of this advance is to open the a-file after b2-b3, but White hasn't even played it yet! Another possibility, rare but true in one of my games, is to develop the R on a6 and activate it through the 6th rank after a timely ...c6-c5.

Another standard option at this point is 11...Bb4 , intending 12.Ne4 Be6 followed by ...Ra8-d8 or ...Be6-d5, for example 13.g4 Bd5 and Black seems able to handle all the problems in the resulting complications.]

12.Bf4

[Once more, Kasparov wants to prove his opponent's move at least useless. Thus he avoids the fianchetto, but develops the B on a square rather ill suited for it: the advance f2-f4 is extremely difficult to carry out now, which means White is limited again to piece manoeuvring.]

12...Be6

[Practically forced, otherwise the push e5-e6 may lead to an unwelcome exchange, at least as long as the Black King resides on the e-file.]

13.g4

[At last! But this advance here is tied more to the specific idea of freeing d4 for the N, in order to exchange it for the white-squared B, than to the general advance of the kingside majority.]

13...Ne7 14.Nd4

[The point. Nevertheless, practitioners of this variation know that the exchange on e6 will strengthen Black's control of the crucial square f5. That was the primary consideration that secures Kramnik a comfortable draw in Game 1 and that might well become the case here, as well.]

14...Nd5 15.Nce2

[An interesting redeployment of the N, in similar spirit to Kasparov's ideas in previous games. The plan 15.Nxe6 fxe6 16.Bd2 (16.Ne2 Bc5 leads to the game continuation via a simple move transposition) 16...Bc5 gives White absolutely nothing, since 17.Ne4 Bd4 is plainly wrong and after 17.Ne2 Rf8 18.Rf1 either 18...b5 or 18...a4 should give Black satisfactory play.; The alternative retreat 15.Bd2 does not offer better chances of success. After 15...Nxc3 (otherwise the N will also go back to e2 or sometimes advance to e4 and the enemy N expelled by a timely c2-c4) 16.Bxc3 h5 17.f3 Bc5 18.Kg2 Bxd4 19.Rxd4 the resulting position can be dangerous for Black only if he fails to exchange a pair of Rs and activate at least one of his own. However, there is just enough time to play 19...b6 20.a3 (unfortunately for White, 20.Rad1 Bxa2 21.Rd7 Rc8 leads to nothing) 20...Rd8 and the draw is very close.]

15...Bc5



16.Nxe6

[To exchange or not to exchange -that is the question! Kasparov makes a big decision that will determine the battlelines for a long time. It seems that he couldn't find anything better, because I do not see any great danger for Black in what follows.]

16...fxe6 17.c4

[The right moment for this advance, in order to force the decentralization of the enemy N.]

17...Nb6



[The capture 17...Nxf4 is plainly wrong: 18.Nxf4 Rf8 (the King cannot defend e6, d7 and g6 at the same time) 19.Nxe6 Bxf2+ 20.Kg2 Rf7 and now either 21.Nxc7+ Rxc7 22.Kxf2 or (even better, in my opinion,) 21.Nxg7+ wins for White.;

Just as playable, however, seems 17...Nb4 18.a3 Na6 when the N will soon return from its exile via c5.]

18.b3

[I am not at all sure this is the best move, as it provides Kramnik's 11th with a lot of meaning. Perhaps 18.Rac1 should be tried, to be followed up with Kg1-g2, possibly Ne2-c3 and b2-b3 only if the need arises or Black exchanges Rs on the d-file.]

18...a4

[No bonus points for anyone who predicted this!]

19.Bd2

[So Kasparov makes this retreat as well... Its evident drawback is that it closes the d-file, a fact Kramnik rushes to take advantage of.]

19...Kf7

[The Rs are finally connected, which means most of Black's problems have been solved. 19...Rf8 would be out of place here, as after 20.Nf4 the fork 20...Bd4 proves quite useless: with the simple reply 21.Rac1 White proves that the exchange of e-pawns is much more to his benefit, while 21...Kf7 22.Bc3 Bxc3 23.Rxc3 axb3 24.axb3 Ra2 25.Rf3 is not very attractive for Black either.]

20.Bc3

[This time, however, 20.Nf4 fails against 20...Bd4 . Kasparov's temporary lack of access to d7 proves quite significant.]

20...Rhd8



thus prevents any active plan.]

23.Rc1 g5

[This prevents f2-f4 for some time, but it also makes possible the alternative break h2-h4 once the Rs have left the board. Another option is to sit tight and answer f2-f4 with ...g7-g6, focusing on a white-square zoning defence.]

24.Rc2

[The usefulness of Kramnik's previous move is revealed in variations like 24.Ng3 Nd7 25.Ne4 Bd4 etc.]

24...axb3

[The usefulness of this exchange eludes me. I expected 24...Nd7 right away, since White fails to trap the R after 25.b4 Be7 26.f4 gxf4 27.Nxf4 Re3 .]

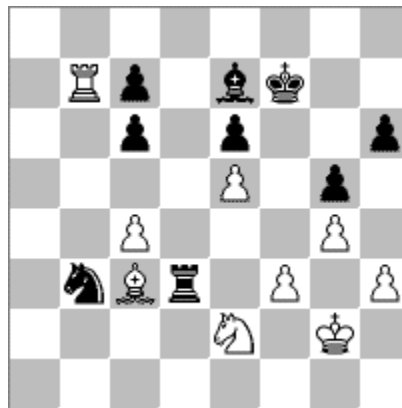
25.axb3 Nd7 26.Ra2

[Kasparov would like to get rid of the enemy R in order to go for the h2-h4 break, but 26.Rd2 is unplayable right now because the B must keep protecting the e-pawn. The plan to use the open file is logical, which is why I wonder Kramnik allowed it in the first place. I suspect he has calculated with precision that it cannot be used to advantage.]

26...Be7 27.Ra7 Nc5 28.f3

[Nothing comes out of 28.b4 Ne4 29.Be1 Rd1 , so there is no real choice.]

28...Nxb3 29.Rxb7



29...Nc1

[Kramnik must have foreseen this tactical trick well in advance. After either 29...Nc5 ; or 29...Nd2 , there would follow 30.Rxc7 when White must be winning.]

30.Nxc1 Rxc3

[Kasparov must feel very frustrated after this game. He has been unable to dent a variation long thought to be inferior, even after the third attempt. I cannot recall if the World Champion ever had such difficulty in even creating winning chances against any opening with White. Meanwhile, Kramnik plays

very solid chess and seems to retain full control. In this match he has been more than an equal match for Kasparov up to now, but can he go the distance?

Note: these comments were completed a little before 1:30a.m. (Greek time) on Monday, October 23.][30...Rxc3 Here the players agreed a draw. A likely continuation is 31.Ne2 Rxc4 32.Rxc7 c5 (but not 32...Rc5 33.Nd4; or 32...Rc2 33.Kf1 c5 34.Nd4 , when the N comes to c6 with dangerous threats) 33.Kg3 Ke8 , with both sides unable to make any serious progress.]
 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$



Taken from: [CanalWeb](#)

Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2849) [E54] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (10), 24.10.2000

[Although Game 9 went according to plan for Kramnik, his previous White was the only encounter in which he was in some real danger. On the one hand, this justifies his general match strategy to avoid main line variations; on the other, it shows he still hasn't made that necessary leap from Challenger to Champion in playing skills.

To put it in different terms, Kasparov has not been able to show his usual dynamic self, a fact attributable mostly to his opponent's successful efforts to limit him. At the same time, Kramnik has not yet displayed that extra something that every new World Champion reveals to his people about chess. The closer he has come to "it" was Game 6 in which he conceived an amazing idea, bringing his opponent to a highly unusual kind of zugzwang with 3 Black pieces very close to the centre. Unfortunately for him, he did not bring to a successful conclusion his magnificent effort, partly because he could not cope with his time trouble and partly because of Kasparov's equally magnificent defence. A great struggle, but not one that should be allowed to be remembered as the highlight of a World Championship match.

What then ought to be the Challenger's approach to Game 10? (or the rest of his White games for that matter) The principled approach is to stay with

1.d4, facing the NimzoIndian with another main line or with an improvement somewhere along the way of Game 8. Another option is 1.Nf3, which I have already predicted will appear on the board at some point in the match. Using it now, however, might show some timidity on Kramnik's part, a potential weakness Kasparov should be able to appreciate at its true level. In either case, the pressure is on!]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4

[What Kasparov does best is believing in himself. Here he challenges the Challenger to find an improvement on Game 8.]

4.e3

[But Kramnik ducks! This is a very wise policy after his success in Game 9. In my comments to earlier games I noted that it has often been a successful policy in World Championship matches to avoid a theoretical confrontation immediately after a satisfactory result. The opponent is eager for some kind of revenge and a theoretical battle is just the kind of contest he might be looking for. Denying him that, he may feel frustrated and lose his balance.] 4...0-0 [Kasparov chooses the most flexible move, leaving his d-, c- and b-pawns at their initial positions for the moment.]

5.Bd3

[5.Nf3; and 5.Nge2 are much more common at this point. Kramnik's choice represents a tricky move order, with which certain sub-variations may be avoided.]

5...d5

[A typical case in point would be 5...c5, which White can answer with 6.Ne2 and thus stay away from the Hubner Variation (6.Nf3 Nc6 7.0-0 Bxc3 8.bxc3 d6).]

6.Nf3 c5

[Yet both opponents head back to main lines. By this I mean main lines of the modern NimzoIndian Defence, in which Black does not hesitate to transform the position to a Queen's Gambit with the black-squared B developed on b4 rather than e7.]

7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4 9.Bxc4 b6



[There are too many choices for Black in the preceding moves to be analysed here, as well as some for White. Suffice it to say that Kasparov chooses the Karpov variation, which may arise from either a NimzoIndian move order or from a Caro-Kann: 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nc6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nf3 Bb4 7.Bd3 O-O 8.O-O dxc4 9.Bxc4 b6. Naturally, the same may occur from a Queen's Gambit, English Defence, the Scandinavian, etc. The Karpov variation is a very interesting and fighting choice, because it creates several asymmetries. The most obvious can be seen in the pawn structure, but another very important one is hidden in the piece arrangement. Black will almost always execute the exchange ...Bb4xNc3 at some appropriate point, giving his opponent at the same time "hanging" Ps and the B pair. The idea behind this exchange is that Black often acquires meaningful pressure on the c-file and sometimes even manages the breakthrough ...e6-e5.

Nevertheless, I do not think such positions suit the World Champion's style. Too much has been revealed too early and a lot of tension has been released, so that most of the play will revolve around piece manoeuvres again.]

10.Bg5

[Kasparov's previous outing with this variation was his 5th match game against Beljavsky (Moscow 1983). His opponent preferred 10.Qe2 and after 10...Bb7 11.Rd1 Bxc3 12.bxc3 Qc7 decided to sacrifice two pawns for dangerous compensation: 13.Bd3 Qxc3 14.Bb2 Qc7 15.d5 Bxd5 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Qe3 Kg7 18.Rac1 Nc6 19.Be4 Qd6 20.Bxd5 exd5 21.Rc4 . Kasparov eventually lost, but his play could be improved upon on several occasions, giving an early indication that the young talent had trouble defending.]

10...Bb7



[At this point, White has to choose the placement of his major pieces. Most often the Q goes to e2, with the Rs on two of the c-, d- and e-files.]

11.Re1

[A flexible approach, but not the only one. Yusupov tried 11.Ne5 in his 6th match game against Ivanchuk (Brussels 1991). Since the continuation demonstrates why both sides need to complete their mobilization before engaging in active operations, it is worth mentioning in full: 11...Nbd7 12.Nxd7 Qxd7 13.Bxf6 gxf6 14.d5 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Bxd5 16.Qg4+ Kh8 17.Qd4 Rac8 18.Qxf6+ Kg8 19.Bd3 Qd8 20.Qh6 f5 21.c4 Bxg2 22.Qxe6+ Kg7 23.Qe5+ Rf6 24.Rfd1 Rc5 25.Qc3 Bc6 26.Be4 Qc7 27.Bxc6 Qxc6 28.Rac1 b5 29.cxb5 Rxc3 30.bxc6 Rfxc6 31.Rxc3 Rxc3 32.Rd7+ Kg6 33.Rxa7 h5 34.Ra4 h4 35.Rxh4 Ra3 36.Kg2 Rxa2 37.Kg3 Ra1 38.f3 Kg5 39.Rb4 f4+ 40.Kh3 Ra2 41.Rb5+ Kg6 and 1/2-1/2.]

reportedly, after this move Kramnik had spent 7 minutes, while Kasparov only 14. Obviously, they are both still following their preparations.]

11...Nbd7

[Now that the Nf6 is well protected, Black may be threatening 12...Bxc3 13.bxc3 Qc7, when White cannot really try 14.Qe2 Bxf3. It would be more sensible to play 14.Bd3 and sacrifice the c-pawn, but it is doubtful whether enough compensation can be guaranteed. However, any meaningful move by White will prevent this threat.]

12.Rc1

[A more standard move is 12.Bd3 . Kramnik follows his match strategy of avoiding the main line. Here this is an especially good policy, since Kasparov should not feel so comfortable against the isolated d-pawn and must therefore improvise under relatively adverse circumstances.]

12...Rc8 13.Qb3



[A rather unusual sub-variation, but not without poison. Kramnik follows a policy of full centralization, as opposed to the usual practice of preparing a kingside attack.]

13...Be7



[Kasparov thought for quite some time on this unexpected retreat, revealing that he was on his own by now. There are several other options that have been used in practice, some of them worse, but one of them much better, I think.

Keeping the tension with 13...Ba5 may prove dangerous after 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Qd4 16.Bxe6 (16.exf6 Qg4 gives Black satisfactory play) 16...Ng4 (White achieved a winning advantage after 16...Ne4 17.Rxe4 Bxe4 18.Bxc8 Rxc8 19.e6 in Knaak-Groszpeter, Cienfuegos 1980)) 17.Be3 Nxe3 18.fxe3 (better than 18.Bxc8 Ng4 19.Bxb7 Qxf2+ 20.Kh1 Qh4 21.h3 b5 22.Ne4 Bxe1, which was played in Knaak-Espig, in the East German championship 1981);

Protecting the B with 13...Qe7 led to disaster in Browne-Ljubojevic, Tilburg 1978: 14.Bd5 (the correct way to use the square d5, as 14.d5 Qc5 15.Na4 Qa5 16.dxe6 Bxe1 17.exd7 Nxd7 is quite unsuccessful and; 14.Ne5 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Qd6 keeps the position unclear) 14...Ba6 (the sequence 14...Bxc3 15.Bxb7 Bxe1 16.Bxc8 Ba5 17.Bxd7 Qxd7 18.Bxf6 gxf6 leads to a clear White advantage) 15.Qa4 Bxc3 (the retreat 15...Ba5 allows White to gain for free the square a2 for his B after 16.a3, so that 16...Bxc3 17.bxc3 Nb8

18.Ba2 Qd7 19.Qc2 creates even more serious problems) 16.bxc3 Nb8 17.Bb3 b5 (or 17...Qd7 18.Qa3 with undisputable advantage for White) 18.Qa5 Qb7 (a decisive mistake, while 18...Qc7 could still provide strong resistance) 19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.d5 exd5 21.Qb4 Qd7 22.Qh4 Kg7 23.Nd4 and 1-0, as there is no defence to either 24.Bc2 or 24.Re3 etc.; The most principled approach for the Karpov variation is 13...Bxc3 14.Rxc3 h6 (a typical way of forcing the enemy black-squared B to make a decision) 15.Bh4 Bd5 16.Bxd5 (16.Ne5 could be tried as well) 16...Rxc3 17.bxc3 exd5 18.Ne5 Re8 with chances for both sides, as in Podgaets-Ubilava, USSR 1979.

Kasparov's choice is probably intended to force the development of events, according to his general style. However, the Karpov variation was a favourite of the ex-World Champion because nothing much seemed to happen for many moves, until the hidden meaning behind piece manoeuvres was revealed!]

14.Bxf6

[I have to admit this surprised me a bit, since exchanges are supposed to favour the side against the isolated d-pawn. Kramnik probably concluded that this was the best way to deal with the positional threat 14...Bxf3. Another idea that has been used in this position is 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15.dxe5 Nd7 16.Bxe7 Qxe7 17.Nb5, but now, instead of 17...Rc5 18.f4 with a strong initiative in Shulman-Smagin, St.Petersburg 1994, 17...Qg5 should be played, when 18.Qg3 Qxg3 19.hxg3 Ba6 leads to multiple exchanges and a probable draw, according to Shipov.]

14...Nxf6

[Another unexpected move, indicating that Kasparov does not feel the danger. It was imperative to play 14...Bxf6, although 15.Nb5 Ra8 16.Ne5 might become annoying (nothing serious is gained by 15.Ne4 Bxe4 16.Rxe4 and now either 16...Rc7 or the more active 16...e5; , while after 15.Ne5 Nxe5 16.dxe5 Bg5 and the battle continues with reasonable chances for Black) . Shipov, however, points out that Black can choose instead 15...Bxf3 16.Qxf3 a6 17.Nd6 (or 17.Na7 Rc7 18.Nc6 Qc8 19.d5 exd5 20.Bxd5 Ne5 with complete equality) 17...Rc7, e.g. 18.Qe4 (18.Nxf7 Rxf7 19.Bxe6 Nf8 20.Rxc7 Qxc7 leads to a more or less balanced game; , while 18.Bxa6 is unenjoyable because of 18...Rxc1 19.Rxc1 Nb8 20.Nb7 Qxd4) 18...g6 with just an optical space superiority for White, but nothing concrete.;

I was a little surprised to learn from Shipov's notes that even 14...gxf6 has been tried, despite its obvious disadvantage of ruining Black's pawn structure. The game Nielsen- Hellsten, Gistrup 1996, continued 15.d5 Kh8 (not much better is 15...Nc5 16.Qd1) 16.dxe6 Nc5 17.Qd1 Qxd1 18.Rcxd1 Bxf3 19.gxf3 fxe6 20.Bxe6 with much the better ending for White, who enjoys both an extra P and by far superior centralization of his forces.]

15.Bxe6



[Naturally. After this pseudo-sacrifice, the most Kasparov can ever hope for is a draw, while his losing chances are considerable. This is why I do not understand at all his recapture with the N. Could it be that he simply overlooked Kramnik's move? If yes, something is seriously wrong with Kasparov. If not, he must have misevaluated the resulting position so greatly, that the same conclusion applies.]

15...fxe6

[Although one usually takes the acceptance of such a sacrifice for granted, this is not necessarily so. here Black keeps his positional threat ...Bb7xNf3 intact, so it makes sense to consider 15...Rc7 16.Ng5 Qxd4 17.Nxf7 (17.Bxf7+ Kh8 18.Ne6 is simply unplayable because of 18...Qg4) 17...Bc5 and the discovered check doesn't promise much. It is true White has won a P, but in circumstances much worse than in the game, as Black's pieces are very active and may cooperate successfully against the enemy King.]

16.Qxe6+ Kh8

[It is unlikely the World Champion did not "see" that after 16...Rf7 17.Ng5 Bd5 both captures 18.Nxd5 and 18.Nxf7 are possible, e.g. 18...Bxe6 19.Nxd8 and one of the Bs will be sorely missed in the immediate future.]

17.Qxe7 Bxf3 18.gxf3

[As a slight consolation for the P, Kasparov damages his opponent's kingside Ps. This, however, should not alarm Kramnik, as he keeps both better control of the centre and the initiative. Exchanging Qs 18.Qxd8 Rfxd8 and only then playing 19.gxf3 proves much worse after 19...Rxd4 etc. Then White would have to work even harder to create serious winning chances. According to reports, Kramnik had used only 30 minutes up to now, while Kasparov one hour and 10 minutes.]

18...Qxd4

[If Black does not play this, then two extra Ps should eventually suffice for the win. Now, however, Kasparov appears to have reasonable compensation for the pawn, not least because of the immediate tactical threat 19...Ng4 (20.fxg4 allows perpetual check).]



19.Nb5

[My best guess is that Kasparov missed this move in his original calculations. However, if he had reached this far, he should be in good enough form to look a little further. 19.Qxa7 would needlessly distance the Q from the kingside and allow serious counterplay after 19...Ng4 (19...Rc5 is also quite attractive) 20.Ne4 Ne5 .

Kramnik's idea is to utilize his superior centralization in order to attack the enemy King. Later the Spanish GM Illescas Cordoba (one of the Challenger's seconds) made the interesting remark that all these moves had been played before, in the game Hazai-Danielsen, Valby 1994, but also that he believed neither player was aware of it!]

19...Qxb2

[Not so much a materialistic approach, as a result of the wish to keep in touch with g7. Still, it removes the Q far away from the main battlefield. In case of 19...Qh4 , the Nf6 will often find itself pinned against its own Q in comparison to the game continuation,; while Illescas pointed out that 19...Qd7 20.Qxd7 Nxd7 21.Rxc8 Rxc8 22.Nxa7 etc.;

Far more attractive seems 19...Qd5 , since the Q remains in the centre and in particular controls the dangerous a2-g8 diagonal. White should probably continue 20.Rxc8 (or 20.Nd6 Ra8 21.Rc7 Nh5) 20...Rxc8 21.Nd6 keeping the initiative (Shipov then gives the characteristic, but not necessarily forced, variation 21...Rb8 22.Re5 Qxf3 23.Rg5 g6 24.Nf7+ Kg8 25.Nh6+ Kh8 26.Rf5 , winning for White).;

It is interesting to know that in the above-mentioned encounter Hazai-Danielsen the much stronger move 19...Qf4 was chosen. The continuation was 20.Rxc8 Rxc8 21.Nd6 Qxf3 22.Nxc8 Qg4+ 23.Kf1 Qh3+ 24.Ke2 Qxc8 25.Kd2 and White eventually won, but with the simple retreat 21...Ra8 Black could have continued the fight. Then the difference between the Q on f4 and on b2, as in the Kramnik-Kasparov game would be evident. In any case, the World Champion did not think for long about his decision. Did he once again underestimate the danger and thus missed a critical moment?]

20.Rxc8

[Probably best. After 20.Rc7 Black may defend with 20...Ng8 , while; 20.Nd6 straight away could be answered by either 20...Ra8 or 20...Qxc1 21.Rxc1 Rxc1+ 22.Kg2 Kg8 23.Qe6+ Kh8 24.Nf7+ Rxf7 25.Qxf7 h6 26.Qxa7 Rb1 with excellent drawing chances in the ending by using a "fortress" type of defence.]

20...Rxc8 21.Nd6 Rb8

[I do not understand this move either, at least in the theoretical sense. There is no apparent reason to avoid 21...Ra8 , other than to tempt Kramnik into taking it, while in addition it avoids later ideas of the enemy N coming to c6 with gain of an important tempo (see especially the analysis to Black's 23rd move).

If White continues as in the game, that is 22.Nf7+ Kg8 23.Qe6 , then Illescas claims the best defence is 23...h6 24.Nxh6+ Kh7 . According to the Spanish GM, White's ideal set up is with Ng5 and Qg6, but it is difficult to establish immediately, as 25.Nf7 (also 25.Nf5 Qd2; and 25.Ng4 Rf8 fail to reach the desired goal) is met by 25...Re8 . In this case white would have to proceed slowly and try to exploit the weak shield of his opponent's king.]

22.Nf7+

[Illescas points out that 22.Qxa7 Rf8 23.Qe7 Ra8 24.Nf7+ Kg8 25.Qe6 (25.Ng5 Qxa2 26.Ne6 Nh5 also proves ineffective) is met by 25...Qxa2 .; Furthermore, 22.Ne8 proves to be an interesting alternative, although Black would reply 22...Ng8 and not 22...Rxe8 23.Qxe8+. Shipov then suggests the simple reply 23.Qd7 when Kasparov's pieces are mere spectators and White can slowly cut off the Qb2 from g7 by f3-f4 and Re1-e5. This plan might have proven equally effective against 21...Ra8.]

22...Kg8

[For once in this game, Kasparov has a serious threat in 23...Re8. Of course, any reasonable attacking move also defends against it, so it remains just a phantom behind the actual play.]

23.Qe6

[Any N move instead allows Black to create a most valuable loophole with 23...h6 and continue his resistance, even if he loses the a-pawn.]



[In a highly unusual occurrence for a World Championship match, Kramnik threatens a typical smothered mate! If left undeterred, he will continue 24.Nh6+ Kh8 (or 24...Kf8 25.Qf7#) 25.Qg8+ Rxc8 26.Nf7#.]

23...Rf8

[Apparently Kasparov played this after less than one minute, but it loses straight away. He was probably disappointed by now and wished a swift end. The alternative King move 23...Kf8 also led to an immediate loss after 24.Ng5 Rb7 25.Nxh7+ Nxh7 26.Qe8# , but some resistance could be offered with; 23...h5 , creating an escape square for the King (this is why Kramnik ought to have taken the a-pawn before anything else). Now the Challenger would have to find

A) Leontxo Garcia proposes in the 25th October issue of "El Pais" the variation 24.Ng5+ Kh8 (of course, not 24...Kf8 25.Qf7#) 25.Qf5 (Shipov gives the equally unappealing 25.Qf7 Qb5 -but not 25...Qd2 26.Re5- 26.h4 Re8 and now either 27.Rc1 Qd7 28.Rc7 Qxf7 29.Nxf7+ Kh7 or 27.Rxe8+ Qxe8 28.Qxa7 b5 with excellent chances of salvation in both lines) , e.g. 25...Qxa2 26.Re6 Kg8 27.Kg2 Qd5 28.Qg6 (much stronger here than 28.Rxf6 Qxf5 29.Rxf5 a5) 28...Qd8 29.h4 Qf8 (or now 29...Rb7 30.Ne4) 30.Rxf6 Qxf6 31.Qh7+ Kf8 32.Qh8+ etc., but there are too many quiet moves by White in this sequence;

B) 24.Ne5+ (admittedly, not a very difficult move, since it focuses on the newly created weakness g6) 24...Kh7 (24...Kh8 should lead to a relatively easy win for White after 25.Ng6+ Kh7 26.Qf5 threatening 27.Nf4+ etc.) 25.Qf5+ Kg8 (again 25...Kh8 26.Ng6+ allows variations like the above) and at this point the move 26.Nc6 takes full advantage of Kasparov's error on move 21. Now the best defence is once again 26...Ra8 (of course, not 26...Qc3 ; or 26...Qd2 , as then 27.Qe6+ and 28.Nxb8 follows,; , while other R moves are even worse, e.g. 26...Rf8 27.Ne7+ Kh8 -since 27...Kf7 28.Qg6# is even more unwelcome- 28.Ng6+; or 26...Re8 27.Rxe8+ Nxe8 28.Ne7+ and 29.Qxh5#)] [when the most incisive move is 27.Re7. After 27...Qc1+ 28.Kg2 Qh6 (or 28...Qxc6 29.Qg6 and 29...Ne8 is unplayable because of 30.Qxc6) 29.h4 brings Black to almost a zugzwang position, e.g. 29...Rf8 30.Rxa7 or 29...Qh7 30.Qe6+ Kh8 31.Ne5 etc. Therefore, White should win even after 23...h5 and the decisive mistake must be searched for earlier (possibly 21...Ra8 but maybe even 14...Nxf6).]

24.Nd8+

[Of course, not 24.Nh6+ Kh8 25.Qg8+ , as now the smothered mate does not materialize after 25...Nxc8 .]

24...Kh8 25.Qe7



1-0

[After this miserable performance, it seems impossible that Kasparov will be able to win two out of the last six encounters. An unbelievably low-level game to bow out as World Champion, it necessarily brings to memory that fateful massacre in the last match game against Deep Blue!]

[25.Qe7 The end is very near, e.g. 25...Kg8 (even worse are 25...Rg8 26.Nf7#; and 25...Re8 26.Qxe8+) 26.Ne6 Rf7 27.Qd8+ and mate in two more moves.]



Kasparov,G (2849) - Kramnik,V (2770) [C78] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (11), 26.10.2000

[After his thrashing in Game 10, Kasparov has very few survival chances in the match. Kramnik loses as rarely as he does, especially with White. A change of pace is required, including the openings. Therefore, the World Champion (still!) should go for 1.d4 in the hope that his opponent did not prepare as well against it as against 1.e4. The Scotch is probably not a good choice at this stage of the match, since Kramnik has already indicated that he is fully ready for such a course of events and Kasparov has refrained from it on so many occasions.]

1.e4

[Well, Kasparov does not agree with me at all... He believes he is ready for the Berlin Defence at last, just as he indicated in Game 9. Then Kramnik avoided the Champion's specific preparation by choosing a different move

order and still managed a draw. What will happen now?

One important conclusion from Kasparov's choice is that he had decided to play 1.e4 and 1.c4 throughout the match. There was no better moment to play 1.d4, therefore one can say with a certain degree of conviction that he did not prepare much for it.]

1...e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

[The other alternative, 3.d4 , is also not to be. The Scotch Opening adds tension in the centre too quickly and is thus an inferior weapon for pressing when one is behind in the scoreboard.]

3...a6

[But now Kramnik again chooses something else, following my previous estimate that he cannot depend on 3...Nf6 for the duration of the match. The Berlin Defence has served its purpose, for what more could one expect from a timid Black opening than 3 draws in 3 games?

This time Kramnik reveals his reserve Ruy Lopez variation, one that he had by necessity prepared before the match. The possibility that the Berlin would turn out badly after just one game or two could not be excluded, so he had to be ready with at least one more option (and probably two).]

4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O b5

[After Anand's experience with the Open Variation in 1995, I do not think anyone expected Kramnik to choose 5...Nxe4 here. However, a real possibility was; 5...Be7 , the Classical Closed with all its ramifications. Kasparov proved an expert on it in his matches against Karpov, but I believe it suits Kramnik's style to a reasonable extent.]

6.Bb3 Bc5

[This is another unexpected choice from Kramnik, but it makes perfect sense in the given circumstances. The Challenger goes for an active continuation, full of specific tactical details, that needs to have been prepared very well. This he is much more likely to have done for Game 11 than the Champion, so he is more likely to be able to dictate the course of events.]

7.a4

[Another major choice is 7.Nxe5 , but I am not an expert in this line and thus will refrain from quick judgement between sub-variations. Here it only needs to be said that White often tries to take advantage of the temporary weakness of the enemy b-pawn.]

7...Bb7 8.d3 O-O 9.Nc3



9...Na5

[Much more energetic than 9...b4 . In these lines, Black often sacrifices temporarily a pawn in order to force the issue. Here compensation comes in the form of White's damaged pawn structure and the pair of Bs.]

10.axb5 Nxb3 11.cxb3 axb5 12.Rxa8 Bxa8 13.Nxe5

[Naturally, the central P is to be preferred from 13.Nxb5 , although the same position may occur via a different move order.]

13...d5

[A key breakthrough on the white squares, securing some compensation where White is weakest. Kasparov cannot afford to take on d5 without exposing several Ps to attack (b3, d3 and even g2).]

14.Bg5



14...dxe4

[Kasparov himself has had valuable experience in this position, against Shirov in Linares 1998: 14...Be7 15.Nxb5 dxe4 16.dxe4 Bxe4 17.Nc3 (in the same tournament, Anand tried 17.Re1 against the same opponent, with the same result) 17...Bb7 18.Re1 h6 19.Bf4 Bb4 20.Ng4 Nxg4 21.Qxg4 Re8 22.Rxe8+ and 1/2–1/2.

Kramnik's choice does what he has managed to do best during the whole match: the Qs are exchanged very early in the game. Even at this late stage

of the London encounter, Kasparov seems unable to impose his style on his opponent and is forced to fight on "foreign" turf.]

15.dxe4 Qxd1 16.Rxd1 b4

[Another important move, adding fuel to the battle for the white squares.]



17.Bxf6

[Apparently a new move, but it is not clear whether it was prepared or an inspiration of the moment. Even if Kasparov had not studied it for this specific encounter, it is quite possible that he might have prepared it for a future game against Shirov, a specialist in this variation. The alternative 17.Nd5 did not accomplish much after 17...Bxf2+ 18.Kxf2 Nxe4+ 19.Kg1 Nxc5 20.Nd7 (there is really nothing better) 20...Rd8 21.Nxc7 (threatening the "pedestrian" 21.Nf6+) 21...Kh8 22.Nxa8 Rxa8 23.Rd4 Ra1+ 24.Kf2 Rb1 25.Rxb4 (and now a simple back rank mate) 25...Rxb2+ 26.Ke3 h5 27.h4 Ne6 28.g3 Rg2 29.Kf3 Rb2 (while Black can do no more than 30...Rxb3+, which is easily avoided as well) 30.Ke3 Rg2 31.Kf3 Rb2 32.Ke3 and 1/2-1/2 in Topalov-Shirov, Monaco 1997.;

The decentralizing 17.Na4 is dealt with 17...Nxe4 18.Nxc5 Nxc5 (but not 18...Nxc5 19.Be7, when 19...Re8 20.Bxc5 Rxe5 is impossible because of 21.Rd8+) , e.g. 19.Ned3 Rd8 20.Re1 Ne4 21.Nxe4 Rxd3 etc. Kasparov's idea is to lead the game into an endgame with unequal material, hoping the asymmetries can work in his favour.]

17...bxc3

[The capture 17...gxf6 is not unworthy of consideration, as the tempting 18.Nd7 proves to be trap (correct is 18.Na4 Be7 19.Rd7 when best for Black is probably 19...Rd8 20.Rxd8+ Bxd8 21.Nd3 Bxe4 22.Nxb4 Be7 with a likely draw) : after 18...bxc3 19.Nxf8 (no better is 19.Nxc5 c2 and 20...Rd8) allows the intermediate attack 19...c2 and after 20.Rc1 Bxe4 21.Nd7 Bd4 Black even wins.]

18.bxc3

[Kasparov's pawns are undoubled, meaning they may produce a passed P later on.]

18...gxf6 19.Nd7 Bd6 20.Nxf8 Kxf8 21.f3



[After massive liquidation, an interesting endgame is on the board, with approximate material equality. Nevertheless, all the winning chances are with White, the only army that may produce passed Ps or attack weaknesses. A R is often better than two minor pieces in the endgame, but most such cases involve B+N rather than 2Bs. The latter complement each other nicely, cover all sensitive spots and prevent the enemy King from advancing.

It is interesting to note that Kasparov had used about 25 minutes of his thinking time, while Kramnik only 6! No prizes for guessing who was still following pre-game preparation at this point...]

21...h5

[A logical advance. Black should exchange this isolated P, in order to allow fewer targets for the enemy R.]

22.h4

[Kasparov decides to block the enemy h-pawn at a square where it can be attacked via the 5th rank. 22.h3 would prove worse than useless after 22...h4 , crippling the kingside majority for ever, but; 22.g3 was possible. Since 22...f5 runs into 23.e5 and then 23...Bxf3 fails against 24.exd6 Bxd1 25.dxc7 , the World Champion would keep intact his hopes of producing one passed P on each wing.

It should be added that the white h-pawn may now become a target as well.]

22...Ke7

[But, of course, not immediately 22...Bg3 because of 23.Rd8+ . Kramnik follows established wisdom by centralizing his King, possibly with the idea ...Ke7-e6 and ...f6-f5 at some point.]

23.Kf2

[Ditto. In the traditional press conference after the game, Kasparov said that he might have missed here a chance to attack the h-pawn by 23.Ra1 , but after 23...Bb7 24.Ra5 Be5 nothing much can be achieved that is not similar to the game.

In any case, Kramnik declared he had analyzed this type of ending during

his preparations and was convinced it was a clear draw. The master has been outplayed at his own game! (or should I say endgame?)]

23...Bb7

[Naturally, the B has to come out of the corner sooner or later. The sooner the better, of course.]



24.c4

[By this time, both players had about one hour left on thier clocks. The position seems balanced, as every White effort has a negative aspect that Black can take advantage of.

For example, the attempt to advance the kingside Ps first with 24.g3 is thwarted by 24...Bc5+ 25.Ke2 (after 25.Kg2 it is equally difficult to make serious progress) 25...Bd6 etc.

Kasparov's choice has the obvious defect of weakening some important black squares, allowing his opponent to set up an appropriate blockade. In addition, the only way to create a passed P on the queenside now is to have it on the c-file, which means it will be closer to the second front White wishes to open on the other side of the board. Consequently, it will be easier to stop it without stretching the defensive pieces too far.]

24...Be5

[Prepares the black-square blockade and at the same time controls a1. Naturally, the R has other ways of using the a -file.]

25.Rd2 Bc8

[Kramnik decides there is no reason to hurry with 25...c5 because of 26.Ra2 . At the same time, he prepares the useful exchange ...f6-f5, after which the enemy King will find it much more difficult to advance without exposing his kingside Ps to attack by the Bs.] 26.Rd5 [Now that the R has reached the 5th rank, the Challenger must take care that his h-pawn does not become dangerously exposed. I suspect Kramnik had already prepared for this eventuality.]

26...Be6

[The advance 26...c5 would prove premature after 27.Ke3 Bd4+ 28.Kd3 and either of the c- or the h-pawns fall.]

27.Ra5



27...c5

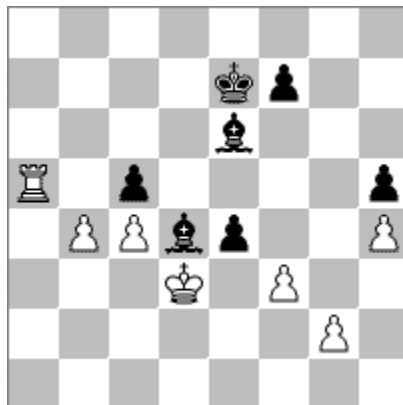
[The pawn finds itself at the right place at the right time. It blocks the 5th rank and also cripples the enemy queenside majority. Meanwhile, it is practically impossible for Kasparov's King to participate in the battle without leaving unguarded the precious h-pawn.]

28.Ke3

[Of course, not 28.Rxc5 Bd4+ . Still, the c-pawn has now become an immobile target and also prevents the black-square B from communicating with the queenside. This endgame is really all about give and take, as almost all moves with positive aspects tend to have some evident defect as well.] 28...Bd4+ 29.Kd3 f5 [Black must do that to prevent the idea Ra5-a8-h8xh5, but of course Kramnik was very happy to oblige. On the other hand, Kasparov now has a chance to create his long-awaited passed P on the queenside.]

30.b4 fxe4+

[reportedly, both contestants had about half an hour left until move 40.]



31.Kxe4

[31.fxe4 Bf2 is not necessarily better, as then Kasparov's Ps become isolated and 32.b5 creates a passed P whose advance is easily arrested. The King must advance at all costs, but some costs are more costly than

others.]

31...Bf2

[The correct way to go about the h-pawn, as after 31...Bxc4 32.bxc5 Bf2 33.c6 the World Champion would threaten 34.Rxh5 and 33...Bxh4 34.c7 Kd7 35.Rc5 would prove disastrous for the Challenger. However, these are pretty small traps and easily dealt with at this level.]

32.bxc5

[This capture keeps the position more open for the White King to infiltrate, but the passed c-pawn is much closer to the Black monarch. The only way Kasparov can make serious headway now is to find a way to sacrifice his R for a B and create passed Ps on both sides of the board. Any attack on a single front should be easily repulsed.]

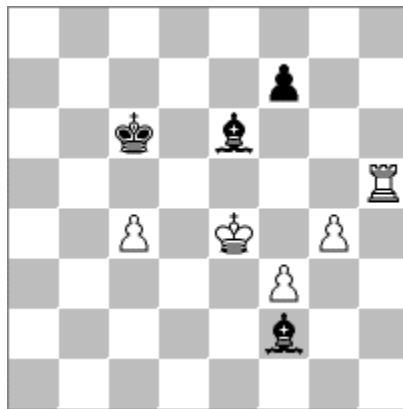
32...Bxh4 33.c6 Kd6

[As an indication of the dangers still hidden in the position, the variation 33...f5+ 34.Rxf5 Bxf5+ 35.Kxf5 allows Kasparov to dream about retaining his title.]

34.Rxh5 Bf2 35.g4

[There is absolutely no way to save both c-pawns.]

35...Kxc6



[By now it is clear the game will be drawn. Too many Ps have been exchanged and a typical defensive ploy can be used by Kramnik almost at will: he will sacrifice one of the Bs in order to eliminate all the remaining enemy pawns. Then the K+R vs.K+B ending will be even more equal than the K+R+N vs.K+R that occurred in Game 4.]

36.Rh2 Bc5 37.Rc2 f6

[The time needed by the Champion to defend the second c-pawn is used by the Challenger to set up a barrier against the King along the 5th rank. The relative weakness of the f-pawn is immaterial.]

38.Rh2

[An admission that there is nothing better, really. The rest is practically

forced.]

38...Bxc4 39.Rh6 Bd5+ 40.Kf5 Bxf3

[The time control is reached and the game is over.]

41.g5 Kd5

[At this point, the players agreed to split the point. Once more, Kramnik demonstrated his ability to outprepare the World Champion, thus robbing him of his most potent weapon: initiative in the transitional phase from opening to the middlegame. It seems Kasparov has been reduced to an "ordinary" top grandmaster without it, while there are only two Whites left to him. If he cannot win a game with Black, a most unlikely event by now, he will be unable to save the match.

This is a daunting prospect for a man that has dominated World Chess for the last 15 years and the period 1999-2000 in particular. His minor setbacks could be considered great successes by most other players, which means he has not been used to dealing with failures. Without burying him before he is dead, this means he will be more anxious for the next 5 games than Kramnik, who can even afford to lose once and still play objective chess. One might even begin to think the unthinkable: a 16-game match with Kasparov unable to win even one game! Who could consider betting in favour of this prospect before October 8, even at 10 to 1 odds?

Note: these comments were completed just before 3:00a.m. (Greek time) on Friday, October 27th.] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$



Taken from: [CanalWeb](#)

Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2849) [E55] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (12), 28.10.2000

[The closer we get to the end, it becomes at the same time easier and more difficult to make serious prediction about the openings or even the strategy both players will adopt. On the one hand, we have more information about the players' attitude in this specific match and thus their behaviour is more predictable. On the side of uncertainty, however, the few games remaining acquire special significance because each player aims for a more specific result than before. Earlier in the match, searching the truth about some variation might be more important than preventing loss. Now Kasparov must necessarily avoid defeat, while Kramnik is also more interested in securing

another half-point than inflicting his opponent a third defeat. For this reason, I would expect the Challenger to stay with 1.d4 in this game as well and switch over to 1.Nf3 in his last two White games if the score remains 2-0 after Game 13. Kasparov has a much wider choice, but an unfortunate one: all his Black openings have failed to impress. The Champion should probably choose once again the NimzoIndian Defence, since it almost always guarantees asymmetrical pawn structures, but refrain from any sub-variation that has him playing against an isolated d-pawn.]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3

[So far, so good!]

4...O-O 5.Bd3 d5 6.Nf3 c5 7.O-O dxc4 8.Bxc4 Nbd7



[Kasparov is the first to vary from Game 10, a foreseeable change of wind after his resounding defeat. Although the very same Karpov variation might be reached via move transposition, this can happen only if Kramnik now plays 9. Qe2 (followed by 9...cxd4 10.exd4 b6) and thus renounce the plan that brought him victory in the preceding encounter. The independent significance of 8... Nbd7 is that White has to commit himself on a move that might not prove useful in the Karpov variation, but of course Black also loses some flexibility.]

9.a3

[This is the critical move, forcing the B to choose at a time when both options have definite disadvantages. Long long time ago, in a game that decided the gold medal in the USSR Championship, Psakhis actually played 9.Qe2 against the very same Kasparov, which was answered by 9...a6 and White eventually won (the two opponents tied for 1st place). Other moves that have been tried at this point are 9.Qb3, 9.Bd3 and even 9.Ne2.]

9...cxd4

[The retreat 9...Ba5 is positionally inferior at this point, as White can answer simply with 10.Nb5, creating the positional threat 11.Nd6 and the tactical 11.dxc5. Then 10...cxd4 is practically forced, allowing 11.b4 Bb6 12.exd4 with a favorable version of the isolated d-pawn: the Black black-squared B finds itself badly misplaced, while its partner has great trouble developing.; It is worth noting that after 9...Qa5 White has a promising exchange

sacrifice with 10.axb4 Qxa1 11.bxc5, which however most players would shun because there is a simpler and stronger alternative: 10.Bd2 forces 10...Bxc3 11.Bxc3 winning both time and space without any concessions.;

The immediate capture 9...Bxc3 is not without interest, as long as after 10.bxc3 continues 10...b6 rather than 10...cxd4, which can now be answered by 11.cxd4 avoiding the hanging Ps and keeping a central pawn majority. A typical continuation then is 11.Re1 Bb7 12.Bd3 12...Be4 (12...Ne4 looks more appropriate) 13.Bf1 with the plan Nf3-d2 and gradual mobilization of the P centre in Korchnoi-Hubner, Manila 1990 (eventually drawn).]

10.axb4

[The only consistent continuation, since 10.exd4 Bxc3 11.bxc3 b6 leads back to the Karpov variation with White having played the (at least) useless a2-a3. Now White gains his usual NimzoIndian pair of Bs, but in return he gets a pawn structure that lacks mobility. The battlelines will be drawn around the remaining black-squared B's activity.;

Also possible is 10.Nb5 Be7 11.Nbxd4 (11.Qxd4 can be neutralized by 11...Nb6) 11...e5 12.Nf5 Nb6 13.Nxe7+ Qxe7 with Black "sacrificing" the B pair for speedy development rather than fewer P islands. The game Semkov-Kosten, Metz 1992, continued 14.Be2 Rd8 15.Bd2 Bg4 16.Rc1 h6 17.Qe1 Nbd5 18.Rc4 Qe6 19.Qc1 Ne7 20.Bb4 e4 21.Bxe7 Qxe7 22.Rc7 exf3 23.Rxe7 fxe2 24.Re1 Rd1 25.f3 (of course, not 25.Qc3 Nd5) 25...Rxc1 26.Rxc1 Bd7 27.Kf2 Bb5 (27...Bc6 also makes sense) 28.Rxb7 and now, instead of 28...a6 that led to an equal endgame and an eventual loss, the English grandmaster should have played 28...Ba6 , e.g. 29.Rb4 Rd8 30.Rd4 Rxd4 31.exd4 Nd5 with good winning chances (the ideas ...Nd5-f4xg2 and ...Nd5-e3-c2 prevent the white R from wondering far into enemy territory).]

10...dxc3 11.bxc3

[Black has a glaring weakness on d6, but it is not very easy for White to use it effectively. The critical square e4 is firmly under control by the Nf6, while extra power will be added by the inevitable development of the Bc8 on b7. In addition, it is not easy to advance c3-c4 without allowing ...a7-a5 and later domination of the square c5 by the other Black N. In that case, White's weakness on d3 might prove even more dangerous. All this means that there will be a lot of piece manoeuvring, with time playing a crucial role, especially in controlling the only open file]

11...Qc7

[The immediate 11...b6 should also be considered, but probably rejected. The correct reply is 12.Nd4 (12.Qd6 proves a shot in thin air, because of 12...Bb7 with the double threat 13...Ne4 and 13...Bxf3 14.gxf3 Qc8) 12...Bb7 13.Bb2 , planning f2-f3 and e3-e4 in order to limit Black's most important pieces. After (13.Qb3 is not as effective as it looks at first sight, since Black has just enough time for 13...Qc7 14.Nb5 Qc6 15.f3 Rfc8 16.Be2 a6 etc. ; , while 13.Bxe6 fxe6 14.Nxe6 Qe7 does not appear too dangerous either) 13...Qc7 the best response is 14.Be2 and not 14.Qb3 Rfc8 15.Be2 Ne5 with ...Ne5-c4 to follow, if necessary preceded by ...a7-a6.]

12.Be2



[Now Kasparov went into a really long think, about 45 minutes. The obvious question for many was whether he would capture the c-pawn, but this is not the only option.] [An unexpected retreat, as White has available much more active alternatives. 12.Qe2 Nb6 (12...a6 would lead by transposition to Polugayevsky-Petrosian, USSR Championship 1961, which continued 13.Bb2 e5 14.e4 Nb6 15.Bd3 Bg4 and Black eventually won, not least because he has already managed to assume control of the critical square c4 and thus prevent the advance of the c-pawn) 13.Bd3 e5 14.e4 Be6 appears perfectly satisfactory for Black, e.g. 15.Be3 (15.Ra5 Nfd7 16.Ng5 Bc4 17.f4 proved too ambitious in Tsemekhman-Anapolsky, Duisburg 1992, which ended with 17...a6 18.fxe5 Bxd3 19.Qxd3 Nc4 20.e6 fxe6 21.Rxf8+ Rxf8 22.e5 g6 23.Qh3 Qb6+ 24.Rc5 h5 25.Ne4 Nxc5 26.bxc5 Qb1 27.Qxe6+ Kh8 28.h3 Qxc1+ 29.Kh2 Qf4+ 30.Ng3 h4 and 0-1) 15...Nfd7 16.Rfc1 Rfc8 17.Nd2 Qd6 18.Bb5 a6 19.Bxd7 Nxd7 20.f3 b5 21.Ra3 Rc6 22.Nb3 Bxb3 23.Rxb3 Qc7 24.Ra3 h6 25.Qa2 Nf8 26.c4 with an equal endgame in Villeneuve-Kosten, Torcy 1991.; However, 12.Qb3 looks much better, e.g. 12...Nb6 13.Be2 e5 14.c4 and the black-squared B begins to tell.]

12...Qxc3

["A lunch under dangerous conditions!" -Nimzowitsch This being one of the few games I had the chance to observe live for the first 3 hours (usually I have work obligations and for a change I went to the theater in the evening), I have to admit Kasparov surprised me. His extra P will be part of a feeble queenside majority and is likely to eventually get traded in multiple exchanges that include the enemy black-square B. The real question that challenges theoretically Kramnik's novelty is, to my mind, about the Nally 12...Ne4, which seems to eventually equalize.

The problem for the World Champion is that after 13.c4 Nc3 14.Qc2 Nxe2+ 15.Qxe2 a draw becomes very probable once again, bringing his opponent one step closer to the desired point total of 8 1/2. I sense that Kasparov's daring capture was decided upon under the influence of the specific sporting circumstances. In a normal tournament situation, I believe he would prefer something much calmer, as defending in exchange for a dubious P is definitely not his cup of tea;

The move 12...e5, taking away the square d4 from White's N and Q, was

tried in Garcia Gonzales-Balashov, Leningrad 1977. The continuation was quite typical for this line: 13.c4 b6 14.Bb2 Bb7 15.Qb3 Rfe8 16.Rfd1 a5 17.c5 and here a draw was agreed, as all queenside Ps will soon disappear from the board, leaving almost no play for either side.; Finally, it is worth noting that after 12...b6 13.Bb2 Bb7 14.Qd4 the game might end up following a path very similar to Mecking-Larsen, Palma de Majorca 1970 (izt), except that the Brazilian GM had then lost some crucial time. Since a lot of ideas are very typical for the specific pawn structure, it is worth noting the game in full, including the different move order: 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 O-O 5.Bd3 c5 6.Nf3 d5 7.O-O Nc6 8.a3 cxd4 9.axb4 dxc3 10.bxc3 dxc4 11.Bxc4 Qc7 12.Be2 b6 13.Bb2 Bb7 14.Qb3 a5 15.Qc4 Qb8 16.Qh4 Ne5 17.Nxe5 Qxe5 18.bxa5 bxa5 19.Rfb1 Be4 20.Rd1 Rfb8 21.Rd2 Bd5 22.Qd4 Qg5 23.Bf1 Ne4 24.Rc2 Nd6 25.c4 Nf5 26.Qd3 Bc6 27.Be5 Rd8 28.Qc3 a4 29.c5 h5 30.Rd2 Rxd2 31.Qxd2 Nh4 32.Bg3 Qf6 33.Qd1 Nf3+ 34.Kh1 h4 35.Bf4 Rd8 36.Bd6 h3 37.Rxa4 Bxa4 38.Qxa4 Nd2 39.Kg1 Qg6 40.Qd1 Nxf1 41.Qxf1 Rd7 42.f3 Rb7 43.e4 Rb1 and 0-1.]

13.Ba3

[Kramnik played this quickly, indicating that he had prepared it before the game. In any case, it is clearly the best move: White's compensation can be found in the weakness of the black squares around the central area, therefore the B belongs more to the a3-f8 diagonal than to a1-h8.] 13...Nd5 [Evidently decided during Kasparov's long think, this centralizing move frees f6 for the safe return of the Q and temporarily blocks the d-file. In addition, after the Q's retreat the positional threat ...Nd5-c3 might become quite annoying. Nevertheless, moving an already developed piece cannot fail to have some defect. Now it was Kramnik's turn to think, for about 15 minutes, which probably means his team had studied only more normal moves. The real battle begins!]

14.Qb1



[Another good move, moving the Q to a spot from which it observes both sides of the board from the 1st rank -Karpov would enjoy playing this! The Rf1 may now come to c1 and from there invade the enemy camp, while the other R can be considered developed on its initial square: White will eventually play b4-b5 and possibly Ba3-d6, or return with Ba3-b2, in both

cases exerting annoying pressure against the a-pawn.

It is important to observe that at some point White will probably have to evict the domineering N with e3-e4, but this cannot be done easily. Since it can then go to f4, White's white-squared B will be attacked, a problem that must be provided for well in advance. On his part, Black must care for the development of his B, another thankless task. Advancing ...b7-b6 will weaken the critical square c6, which can be easily occupied by the enemy N under the protection of the b-pawn.

Moving the Nd7 to free a modest square means that more black squares are weakened, especially e5, thus augmenting White's compensation. Overall, it seems that Kramnik has obtained a little more than enough for the P.]

14...Qf6

[This has to be played sooner or later, but it means Kasparov keeps moving his developed pieces. This allows Kramnik to redeploy some of his own, without worrying much about losing precious tempi.]

15.Bd3

[Practically necessary, in order to take the sting out of ...Nd5-c3, but also very useful. Kramnik forces a concession from his opponent, in order to get some useful information about the correct arrangement of his pieces.]

15...h6

[An important decision with long-term consequences, such as the near impossibility of later challenging for some black squares with ...f7-f6, as then the weakness of g6 could prove disastrous. However, 15...Qh6 might create even bigger problems, because the Q distances herself too much from the main theater of war.]

16.b5

[The time has come to open more lines. As there are no useful breaks, a pawn advance will have to do.]

16...Rd8

[This is an almost certain indication that the B will not be developed on the h1-a8 diagonal, since then the enemy N would arrive on c6 with gain of tempo. The alternative 16...Re8 also made sense, planning ...e6-e5, ...Nd7-b6 and ...Bc8-g4. The problem with that idea is that then the R may be attacked by the enemy N from d6, so 17.Nd2 suggests itself as a reply.]

17.Bb2 Qe7



18.Ra4

[An excellent manoeuvre, strongly reminiscent of 20.Ra3 of Game 6 and even 19...Rg6 of Game 3. It looks like the Challenger has studied an alternative way of developing his Rs especially for this match! In any case, Kramnik believes he is better and begins playing for a win quite vigorously. The R prepares to swing over to the kingside, while the idea Qb1-a1 should not be underestimated either. In the eventuality of Kasparov surrendering his extra P without exchanging the black-squared B, his losing chances will become very real.

A more modest approach would be first 18.Ba3, checking whether the World Champion is happy with a draw or is willing to risk the self-pin 18...Nc5 instead. Then 19.Ne5 seems quite strong, since it prevents ...b7-b6 and the twin threats 20.Rc1 and 20.Bh7+ followed by 21.Bg6 practically force 19...Bd7, but after 20.Bh7+ Kh8 21.Bg6 Be8 (of course, not 21...Rf8 22.Bxf7) 22.Bxf7 Bxf7 23.Bxc5 White is probably winning already. Essentially this means that 18. Ba3 would be answered by 18...Qf6 and Kramnik would have the option of repeating the position with 19.Bb2 Qe7.

At this point he could play 18.Ra4, making it clear to his opponent and the World that he is playing for a win, since the draw was his for the taking. This psychological power play must be weighed against giving Kasparov an extra 2 moves for minimal thinking time, a consideration not to be underestimated, as the Champion had consumed much more time than the Challenger by now. Since Kasparov knew very well that he would have to repeat the position anyway, Kramnik chose pure chess over psychology. Besides, if he had made it so clear that he wishes to avoid a quick draw, he might come to regret the decision in case things go wrong later on.]

18...Nc5

[Unfortunately for the World Champion, Kramnik's next move cannot be prevented by 18...Nf8, as 19.Qa1 f6 20.Nd4 reestablishes material equality under terms very favorable to White (once again, (not immediately 20.Rxa7 Rxa7 21.Qxa7, because then 21...Nxe3 is quite good) 20...b6 is unplayable because of 21.Nc6). However, the removal of the N from the kingside cannot be a good omen.]

19.Bh7+

[Now 19.Ba3 can be answered by 19...b6 and White doesn't have anything special.]

19...Kh8

[Running towards the centre with 19...Kf8 allows the pin Bb2-a3 to become even stronger, either immediately or after the intermediate attack 20.Rg4 .]

20.Rh4



[Another direct threat forces another concession. It is clear Kramnik wants to take full advantage of 15...h6.]

20...f6

[This advance weakens irreparably g6, but after 20...Nf6 there would follow 21.Bxf6 (even better than 21.Ne5 , which should also be decisive because of the always powerful threat 22.Bg6, for example 21...Nxh7 22.Rxh6 gxh6 23.Ng6+ is unplayable) 21...Qxf6 22.Rf4 Qe7 23.Ne5 Rf8 24.Rxf7 winning immediately.]

Here Kramnik went into another relatively long think, clearly indicating that his choice on the 18th move was based more on the evaluation of the position than concrete calculations. As a result, both players were left with just over half an hour until the first time control.

This must have been the kind of murky situation Kasparov was hoping for when he captured on c3, but at a considerable risk. However, he betrayed once again the superstitious aspect of his character (adding to his notorious belief in "his" magic number 13), when after the game he quipped: "I didn't think I could lose, it was my son's birthday!". (Does he really believe those things or does he say them in order to create an aura of fateful invincibility, both for himself and his opponents? In any case, Kramnik seems to have remained unaffected during the whole match...)]

21.Rc4

[Kramnik decides he has achieved enough on the kingside with the R and returns his attention to the other side of the board. Amassing more pieces on the "eastern" front with 21.Qg6 just fails to 21...Bd7 and 22...Be8, when the white-square B proves very unfortunately placed.;

Another way to free the square h4 for the N is 21.Rh5 , but again 21...Bd7 manages to defend in time: 22.Nh4 Be8 23.Ng6+ (23.Bg6 does not really threaten anything, since the King can now return to g8 with impunity) 23...Bxg6 24.Bxg6 when White must feel sorry there are no more Ns to take

advantage of g6.; Finally, the "bayonet" attack 21.g4 burns enough bridges to secure a loss if the attack fails, which is exactly what might happen after 21...e5 blocking the R from returning "west". The salient point here is that after 22.g5 hxg5 there is neither a productive discovered check nor a satisfactory way to bring reinforcements to the critical sector, e.g. 23.Qg6 gxh4 24.Qh5 can be answered successfully by both 24...Bg4 and 24...g6.]

21...Bd7

[Once again, Kasparov rushes to protect g6 against the idea 22.Nh4. At the same time, he comes very near the completion of his development.]

22.Ba3

[Another "take-back" move, but a continuous change of direction is almost never a good sign. Has Kramnik missed something along the way or was his compensation largely illusory all along the way? The latter seems unlikely, but I cannot find any real specific reinforcements anywhere.]

22...b6

[Kasparov wisely refrains from 22...Rac8 for the time being, because he plans to use that R to support the advance of his queenside Ps and control any lines that might open in that sector. If necessary, the N can be supported by the other R, which does nothing in particular any more on the d-file.]

23.Be4

[Yet another retreat, a course of events that might have made Kramnik feel quite uncomfortable.]

23...a6

[The times, they are changing! Still, White should not be in any serious danger, as the extra enemy P is very difficult to advance.]

24.bxa6 Rxa6



[Now it is clear that the Challenger's plan has been a failure and emergency measures must be taken. Mutual time trouble is approaching and the realization that something has gone wrong may ruin even Kramnik's drawing chances. Nevertheless, in pure chess terms White still has almost enough compensation for the P in his much more active and better

coordinated pieces.]

25.Bxc5

[A very specific approach to the problems in this particular case. By giving up the pride of his position, the black-squared B, Kramnik must have calculated almost all the following developments.]

25...bxc5 26.Rfc1 Ra5



[26...Rc8 is much trickier, for example 27.Qb7 (27.Nd4 looks better, e.g. 27...Rb6 28.Qa1 preparing both 29.Qa5 and 29.Qa3 followed by Nd4-b3) 27...Rb6 28.Qa7 Rbc6 sets up an at least temporarily successful defence of the extra P and proves that both sides can play the back rank combination/pinning/ unpinning game: 29.Nd4 R6c7 30.Qa3 fails against 30...cxd4 31.Qxe7 Rxc4 etc.]

27.Qb2

[27.Qb7 appears much better to me, as after 27...Bc6 (not 27...Bb5, which is answered by 28.Qxe7 Nxe7 29.Rxc7 rather than 28.Bxd5 Qxb7 29.Bxb7 Bxc4 and Black wins; , while 27...Rb5 28.Qa7 seems equally pointless, e.g. 28...Rc8 29.Nd4 Rb2 30.Rxc5) 28.Qxe7 Nxe7 29.Bxc6 Nxc6 30.h4 the c-pawn is defenceless (30...Rd5 31.e4). By this time, both players had about 10 minutes to complete their 40 first moves.]

27...Rb5

[Kasparov must have been (rightly) worried about 28.Bb1 and 29.Qc2, forcing yet another important concession.]

28.Qa3 Nb6

[A good zeitnot trap, while 28...Rc8 leads to nothing after 29.Nd4 Rb4 30.Nb3 etc.]

29.R4c3

[Kramnik correctly avoids the rush 29.Rxc5, as then would follow 29...Bc6 etc. Now, however, it is extremely difficult to defend the c-pawn in the long run.]

29...Rb4

[Another idea was 29...Rc8 planning 30.Nd4 cxd4 31.Qxe7 dxc3, but this is

not an easy decision to make in time trouble, because Black's pawn formation remains quite loose. Reportedly, Kramnik had now about 5 minutes left and Kasparov only a couple more, so keeping maximum tension seems indicated.]

30.Nd2

[Both defending the B and redeploying the N towards b3. However unfair life might seem to Kramnik at this point, he faces mortal danger.]



30...f5

[The tempting 30...Na4 leads to an immediate draw after 31.Rxc5, but; 30...Rc8 seems much better, e.g. 31.Nb3 (the Rc8 is defended twice, thus rendering 31.Qxb4 impossible) 31...Ra4 (again not 31...Na4 32.Nxc5; or 31...Nd5 32.Bxd5 exd5 33.Nxc5) 32.Qb2 c4 and Kasparov keeps every chance of winning alive. In most cases the Q will be activated on d6, sometimes even on c5, while White's pieces become more and more passive.]

31.Bf3

[I get the impression both players must be very tired and pressed for time by now. Practically better seems 31.Rxc5 Rxe4 (31...Ra4 proves useless after 32.Qb2) 32.Nxe4 fxe4 33.Qb4 when the front e-pawn is doomed and the endgame is an easy draw, for example after 33...Na4 34.R5c4 Qxb4 35.Rxb4 Bc6 36.h3 etc.]

31...Na4

[Despite the intermediate move that weakened e5, 31...Rc8 was still indicated. Now the inevitable end of the game must have come as a relief to the Challenger.]

32.Rxc5 Rb2

[It is never too late to lose: 32...Nxc5 33.Qxb4 Rc8 34.Nb3 Nxb3 35.Rxc8+ is another typical time trouble trap, but extremely easy for World Championship level (or worse).]

33.Nc4 Qxc5 ½-½

[This was a highly tense encounter, very characteristic of games towards the end of an exhausting match. Although Kramnik seems to maintain

control of things, he most certainly did not use his White with the effectiveness of previous games. Kasparov might still be in with a chance if he wins Game 13, presumably his lucky number, but otherwise the chess world should be preparing for the crowning of a new Champion. Note: these comments were completed a little before 11:00a.m. (Greek time) on Sunday, October 29, together with the introduction to Game 13.]

[The last chance for a mishap belonged to Kasparov: 33...Rxf2 34.Rc8 . Now, however, after; 33...Qxc5 34.Qxc5 Nxc5 35.Nxb2 Rc8 there is no play whatsoever left in the position.]



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Kasparov,G (2849) - Kramnik,V (2770) [C67] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (13), 29.10.2000

[The number 13 is supposed to be Kasparov's magic charm, least of all because he became the 13th World Champion in the tradition of Steinitz and al.

If however he does not manage to pull off a rabbit out of his hat today, there is practically no chance of drawing the match. Kramnik has proven less strong in decisive games, but he cannot be expected to lose with White in Game 14 and especially in Game 16.

The Challenger will probably switch over to 1.Nf3 and keep full control of the proceedings. On the other hand, it is quite difficult to predict the best choice for Kasparov on his very first move today. He has refrained from 1.d4 throughout the match, so it is unlikely his team has some stunning novelty prepared against one of Kramnik's favourite systems.

If the history of the match is any indication, Kramnik will sidestep the Champion's preparation by choosing a suitable side-variation and steer the game towards a slightly inferior endgame. 1.d4 was a choice Kasparov should have made in Game 11 at the latest. In other words, 1.e4 seems psychologically and technically forced now.]

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6

[If I expected Kasparov's opening, I must admit that Kramnik's choice was a surprise for me. After his switch to the Archangelsk variation in Game 12, I thought he would not return to the Berlin any more during the match.]

4.O-O Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.Nc3 h6 10.h3 Ke8



11.Ne4

[Kasparov thought for 35 minutes before he played this move. A more traditional approach is 11.b3 , leaving open the option Nc3-e2, possibly with a subsequent jump to f4, d4 or g3 (after g2-g4).]

11...c5

[Another commital move, as would be 11...b6 . Kramnik obviously wants to control d4, but it was also possible to play; 11...Be6 , as 12.g4 can be answered with 12...Bd5 .]

12.c3

[Kasparov prevents the N jump, but at the same time weakens another white square. It seems the Challenger's opening has been successful once more.]

12...b6

[Now 12...Be6 proves inappropriate after 13.g4 (13...Ne7 14.Nxc5).]

13.Re1

[Protects the Ne4 before it is actually attacked, but it is not clear how White will continue.]

13...Be6

[Kramnik prefers blocking the e-file to 13...Bb7 , although this would be perfectly possible as well.]

14.g4

[This move was accompanied with a draw offer, which the Challenger had no reason to refuse. Obviously Kasparov is very tired, but Steinitz has said long time ago that a professional chessplayer is like a soldier in that he has no right to feel sick. A great pity...] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$



Taken from: [CanalWeb](#)

Kramnik,V (2770) - Kasparov,G (2849) [A30] The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London (14), 31.10.2000

[Before this game, it seems incredible that Kasparov can save this match. If my memory serves me well, the last time Kramnik scored 1/2 point out of 3 was in 1994, at the very beginning of his disastrous F.I.D.E. Candidates' cycle: he lost the first two games in succession, another experience I don't recall him ever having since.

On the other hand, I would bet at least 100 to 1 before the match against Kasparov not winning even one game out of 16 -and who would dare take me on? The World Champion has proved capable of rising in difficult moments, including a memorable last round win against his present Challenger in Linares 1997. Even though his premature draw offer in Game 13 indicated he does not possess enough energy any longer, I refuse to accept the argument that renders his age a significant factor in his performance. This would not only insult Kramnik's excellent psychological match strategy, but also be simply untrue: 37 is not such an advanced age for a 16-game match and the teacher is reputedly in much better physical shape than his former pupil. All bets are on!]

1.Nf3

[As I had already predicted several times in my comments on earlier games, Kramnik switches over to an even more solid approach for his last two Whites. Reportedly, however, Kasparov now grabbed his head with both hands and started thinking.

Since 1.Nf3 could not have been such an unexpected choice from the Challenger, this sudden physical response from the Champion necessarily betrays his need for concentration. Consequently, one may conclude he feels very determined today to try go where he has never been before: win a game with Black against Kramnik under normal rates of thinking time.]

1...Nf6 2.c4

[This time it is Kramnik who opts for some version of the English/Reti Opening complex. It is a very solid approach, with a lot of tricky move orders that allow or forbid favourite variations of both players. The most important aspect of the battle to come concerns the placement of the d-

pawns: where and when will they advance?]

2...b6

[A smart choice, avoiding the kingside fianchetto and at the same time keeping maximum flexibility in regard to his central Ps.]

3.g3 c5

[Another obvious possibility is 3...Bb7 , but then White could transpose to the Queen's Indian Defence with 4.d4 . This might not be a totally unwelcome prospect for Kasparov, especially as he also allowed it with his second move, but now the subvariations where Black plays an early ...Bc8-a6 to put pressure on c4 and unbalance the position would no longer be feasible.]

4.Bg2 Bb7 5.O-O g6

[The double fianchetto was chosen by the very same Kasparov in the critical 23rd game of his 1986 London/Leningrad World Championship match against Karpov. True, there he was more than happy with a draw in what was to be his final Black game, because he was leading by one point, while now he desperately needs a win. Still, it is nice to use a variation that brings happy memories.]

6.Nc3

[Karpov played 6.d4 , committing himself first and demonstrating that he wanted more space in the centre.;

Another option worth noting is 6.b3 , keeping maximum symmetry and thus more chances that the game will be eventually drawn. It has been well established in practice that the best way to split a point is to play "normal" chess rather than "drawnig" chess, but White can almost always choose among a wider range of alternatives. In this case, I believe it is better to delay the giving of any unnecessary information to the opponent. A likely continuation would be 6...Bg7 7.Bb2 O-O , when 8.Nc3 is quite OK.]

6...Bg7



7.d4

[A very important decision that leads the game back to the 1986 K-K encounter. Once again 7.b3 is possible, as after 7...Ne4 8.Bb2 Nxc3 9.Bxc3

Bxc3 10.dxc3 the doubling of the pawns is not at all negative for White: a semi-open file and better control of the centre, combined with a relative weakness of the black squares on Black's kingside, would then give White a definite advantage.

Kramnik decides to go for the "hedgehog" formation, even though its asymmetry is what Kasparov is really looking for. Personally, I think it would be better to wait for Black's ...d7-d5 and then exchange everything via a timely d2-d4. If both players keep a waiting stance, it is possible to play e2-e3, Qd1-e2, Ra1-c1, Rf1-d1 and only then d2-d4, in order to be able to choose better whether to recapture on d4 with a P or a piece, according to circumstances.

It is likely Kramnik wants to remove part of the psychological tension by making a significant choice rather than maintaining the present equilibrium, but this gives Kasparov the type of position he has been looking for throughout the match. It is really a strange moment to change match strategy!]

7...cxd4

[Now the outlines of the middlegame begin to take shape, since the pawn structure will remain more or less stable for quite some time. White controls more space, at least for the time being, but Black possesses an extra central P.]

8.Qxd4

[Recapturing with the Q is generally thought to be strongest, because it promotes development and avoids exchanges. However, it is also possible to play 8.Nxd4 Bxg2 9.Kxg2, "threatening" to establish the so-called Maroczy Bind with 10.e4. The game Karolyi-Horvath, Hungary 1986, continued 9...0-0 (objectively better seems 9...Qc8, e.g. 10.Qd3 Na6 or 10.b3 Qb7+ and 11...d5 with satisfactory play for Black, although the massive exchanges that will inevitably follow in the latter sub-variation should lead to an easy draw) 10.e4 Qc7 11.b3 Nxe4 (here Fernandez-Psakhis, Novi Sad 1990, diverged with 11...Na6 12.f3 Qb7 13.Be3 Nc5 14.Rc1 Rac8 15.Nd5, when White's space superiority was undisputable) 12.Nxe4 Qe5 13.Qf3 Qxd4 14.Rb1 Qe5 15.Bf4 Qa5 16.Nf6+ Bxf6 17.Qxa8 Nc6 18.Qb7 Qf5 19.Rbd1 Bd4 20.Rfe1 e5 21.Be3 Bc3 22.Re2 Qh5 23.Rxd7 Qxe2 24.Qxc6 and White stood much better because of the placement of his pieces.]

8...d6

[This is an indication that the Nb8 will be developed on d7, leaving open the h1-a8 diagonal and the c-file. Attacking the Q with 8...Nc6 does not really gain a tempo, as eventually the Q will want to move away from hidden attacks on the a1-h8 diagonal. The only advantage of hitting it at once is that White is then forced to choose relatively early where to remove her, before more information about other Black pieces is revealed.

Nevertheless, the N may prove to be far away from the kingside and one spectacular example should suffice to demonstrate the dangers of such an approach: 9.Qf4 Rc8 10.Rd1 d6 11.b3 Ne4 12.Nxe4 Bxa1 13.Ba3 Bg7 14.Nfg5 0-0 15.Nxh7 Kxh7 16.Ng5+ Kg8 17.Qh4 Re8 18.Bh3 Kf8 19.Ne6+ Kg8 20.Ng5 Kf8 21.Ne6+ Kg8 22.Nxd8 Rcx d8 23.Bg2 Bf6 24.Qh6 e6 25.h4

d5 26.h5 Bg7 27.Qg5 dxc4 28.Rxd8 Rxd8 29.bxc4 gxh5 30.Bb2 e5 31.Bd5 Rd6 32.Qxh5 Rd7 33.Qf5 and 1-0 in Ribli-Kouatly, Lucerne 1985.]

9.Rd1

[Naturally, 9.b3 is still possible and has been essayed on numerous occasions.]

9...Nbd7 10.Be3

[The 1986 K-K encounter mentioned above reached the same position via a slightly different move order and continued 10.b3 Rc8 (10...0-0 11.Qh4 can be dangerous, as the Bc1 may come to h6) 11.Bb2 0-0 12.Qe3 Re8 13.Rac1 a6 14.Ba1 Rc5 (this R manouvre seems to equalize completely) 15.a4 Qa8 16.Ne1 Rf5 17.Bxb7 Qxb7 18.f3 h5 19.Ng2 Rc5 20.Bb2 Rcc8 21.Ba3 Nc5 22.Rb1 Ne6 23.Qd3 Nc7 24.Nf4 b5 (finally, this typical pawn break moves the battle over to the queenside, even if it has to be made with a temporary P sacrifice) 25.cxb5 axb5 26.Nxb5 Nxb5 27.Qxb5 Qxb5 28.axb5 Rb8 and was eventually drawn, allowing Kasparov to keep his recently acquired title of World Champion.]

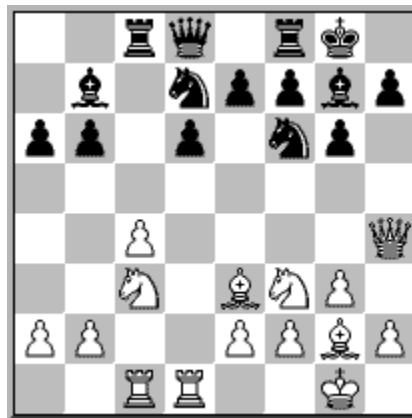
10...Rc8 11.Rac1 0-0

[Now that the Bg7 is protected, the enemy Q must move without delay...]

12.Qh4

[...and visit the kingside at just the right time. An earlier excursion to h4 could have been met by ...h7-h6 with the idea ...g6-g5, when the Q could get quite embarrassed. It should be kept in mind that Kramnik has not played b2-b3, so the Q also has to perform the duty of defending the c-pawn.]

12...a6



[The advance ...a7-a6 completes the "necessary" moves that both sides have to make in preparation for the middlegame. Although White enjoys more space, Kasparov has found comfortable spots for all his minor pieces and has kept the Qs on the board in an asymmetrical P structure. The big question for Black is to find a way for the major pieces to enter the battle. Kasparov's R manouvre on the 5th rank in the game against Karpov was a good idea, but it should not work for more than equality. It is

necessary to try for the pawn break ...b6-b5 and create some counterplay against c4, while refusing any massive liquidation. Kramnik, on the other hand, face a much more complex dilemma: he stands slightly better overall, but with no clear plan and a strong subjective wish to equalize the position.]

13.Ne1

[This is not as inconsistent as may seem at first sight. The Challenger goes for the exchange of white-squared Bs, which he refrained from earlier, at a point where he has more information about his opponent's pieces. For example, the development of the Nb8 on d7 means that c6 may become weak, especially after the transference of a white N on d5, a subsequent exchange and recapture with the c-pawn.

On the other hand, the very same exchange releases some of the congestion in the Black camp and provides the Q with a most useful diagonal.

It must have not escaped Kasparov in his preparation that the encounter Kramnik-Karpov, Dos Hermanas 1999, had continued 13.b3 Rc7 14.g4 (the very same manoeuvre of the main game 14.Ne1 Bxg2 15.Nxg2 had been tried by Kramnik's official second in the game Illescas-Gelfand, Pamplona 1999, after which there followed 15...Re8 16.Nf4 Qb8 17.Nfd5 Rcc8 18.Bg5 Qb7 19.a4 with White keeping a distinct space advantage but failing to make it tell: 19...Kh8 20.g4 Nxd5 21.Nxd5 e6 22.Nf6 Nxf6 23.Bxf6 d5 24.Rc3 Bxf6 25.Qxf6+ Kg8 26.Rcd3 Qe7 27.Qxe7 Rxe7 28.cxd5 exd5 29.Rxd5 Rxe2 30.Rd8+ Rxd8 31.Rxd8+ Kg7 32.Rd6 Re4 33.Rxb6 Rxg4+ 34.Kf1 Rh4 35.a5 Rh3 36.b4 Rb3 37.Ke2 g5 38.Kf1 h5 39.Rxa6 Rxb4 40.Rb6 Ra4 41.a6 and ½-½) 14...h6 15.h3 g5 16.Qg3 b5 17.h4 bxc4 18.hxg5 hxg5 19.b4 with an extremely unbalanced position. However, what is good against Karpov in a tournament situation is not necessarily optimum against Kasparov when a draw is required...]

13...Bxg2 14.Nxg2 Re8

[Apparently Kasparov thought for quite some time on this one, but I do not believe it had to do so much with the move itself as with the overall plan for the next few moves. It is evident that 14...Qc7 15.Nd5 favours White, so the e-pawn is protected in order to execute the Q manoeuvre without having to exchange Ns on d5. In addition, Black may now avoid the exchange of black-squared Bs after Be3-h6, if he wishes so, with ...Bg7-h8.]

15.b3

[Sooner or later, this move is practically necessary, to protect the c-pawn in an economical way and release the Q from a duty unworthy of her.

However, this casts some doubt on the correctness of the plan of development with Bc1-e3; perhaps the B should have been fianchettoed, after all, or at least developed to h6 in one movement.]

15...Qc7 16.Bg5

[Now it was Kramnik's turn to think for a while. 16.Nd5 Qb7 would be useless, but it also made sense to try;

16.Nf4 as in the Illescas-Gelfand game mentioned earlier. His black-squared B does not seem to know what it wants.]

16...Qb7

[The Q is perfectly placed here: she replaces the exchanged B, supports the desirable advance ...b6-b5, may provide additional support to the e-pawn and in general cooperates with the rest of her forces much better than her counterpart. Kasparov must have been satisfied at this point, especially if one compares the position with his other "Black" games from the match.]

17.Ne3

[The only way to prevent the following advance is 17.a4 , but then the b-pawn is irreparably weakened and Kramnik would miss the white-squared B or the Q from the queenside. Kasparov would almost certainly continue 17...Nc5 18.Rb1 Nfe4 assuming the initiative, while the ...b6-b5 break would not be long in coming, anyway.]

17...b5



[The time has come to cross the 6th rank! Just give Kasparov a pawn break and he knows how to improve the mobility of his pieces without fail. Now Black has equalized completely and Kramnik must find a way to neutralize his opponent's plan of further expansion.]

18.Ned5

[The exchange 18.cxb5 axb5 is an important alternative, as after 19.Qb4 White can attempt to take advantage of the newly created queenside P majority. The problem is that Black can play 19...Rc5 , protecting the P and attacking the enemy B, while at the same time preparing the doubling or even tripling of major pieces on the c-file. How different all that would be now if instead of 16.Bg5 Kramnik had chosen 16.Nf4 and then Nf4-d3!;

However, I do not quite understand why 18.Ncd5 is not better than his present choice, allowing White to capture on c4 with a piece every time. The only possible objection I can raise is that he would be eventually obligated to exchange his B for a N, e.g. after 18...bxc4 19.Rxc4 Rxc4 20.Qxc4 h6 21.Bxf6 (of course, not 21.Nxf6+ exf6) 21...Nxf6 , but it seems to me that control of the only open file after 22.Rc1 should more than enough compensation.]

18...bxc4 19.bxc4

[Now Kasparov has an isolated P to bite on, with Kramnik's only consolation being the proud N on d5. This, however, can be kicked away with ...e7-e6 at an appropriate moment. Kramnik is much better at nursing small long-term advantages than in transforming a temporary initiative to something more concrete.]

19...h5

[An interesting choice, possibly revealing more about Kasparov's way of thinking than he would like to say explicitly. In a tense situation he plays a seemingly neutral move, asking his opponent what he wants to do if left undisturbed. In effect, he tells him there is no real compensation for the damage that was self-inflicted on White's queenside P formation.

The advance ...h7-h5 is not without its purely chessic aspects, but these are neither immediate or apparent to the naked eye: it prevents once for all the idea Bg5-h6 and creates ideas of ...h5-h4 later on, when both the Q and the B will be far away from their present posts. Kasparov must have anticipated a major piece endgame, where the advance of the h-pawn can be of paramount importance.

In any case, 19...Qc6 would not make a great impression after 20.Nxf6+ Nxf6 21.Nd5 etc. Reportedly, at this point Kramnik had 59 minutes left to reach move 40, while Kasparov only 37.]

20.Qf4

[Kramnik almost caught up in time with Kasparov after this. He was probably trying to fathom the depths of the Champion's thoughts, but 20.Nxf6+ Nxf6 21.Nd5 was much worse now, anyway, because of 21...Nxd5 22.cxd5 Rxc1 and the black pieces are free to roam the empty queenside avenues, e.g. after 23.Bxc1 Rc8 etc.]

20...Qc6

[Now things are quite different, because the Q is much more vulnerable on f4.]

21.Bxf6

[For example, 21.Nxf6+ can now be answered by 21...exf6 22.Qxd6 (all other replies also lose a piece, for example 22.Bh6 g5; or 22.Rxd6 fxe5 23.Qd2 Qxc4 24.Rxd7 Bxc3) 22...fxg5 (22...Qxd6 23.Rxd6 fxe5 is equally satisfactory) 23.Qxd7 (23.Qxc6 makes no difference) 23...Qxd7 24.Rxd7 Rxc4 25.Rd3 Re8 and the pinned N is lost.

Therefore, Kramnik is forced to exchange the unfortunate black-square B after all, casting serious doubt on his earlier decision 18.Ned5.]

21...Nxf6 22.Nxf6+ Bxf6 23.Nd5

[Once again White gets a proud N on d5, but once again this strong square is not permanently guaranteed because of the possibility of ...e7-e6. Besides, the weakness of the c-pawn is bound to make itself felt eventually.]

23...Bb2

[A useful intermediate move, forcing the R to declare its intentions.]

24.Rb1

[24.Rc2 looks more sensible, keeping an eye on White's greatest weakness.]

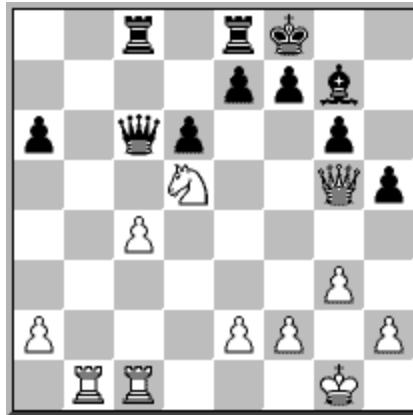
24...Bg7 25.Qg5 Kf8

[Another good defensive move, demonstrating how the compactness of Black's position allows an easier allocation of active and passive roles among the pieces.]

By now both opponents had about 25 minutes each, which promised an exciting time scramble.]

26.Rdc1

[This was Kramnik's idea when he played 24.Rb1, in effect moving the Rd1 over to the b-file. This pleasure, however, has the cost of releasing potential pressure down the d-file, thus prompting Kasparov to play...]



26...e6

[The right move at the right time. 26...Qc5 would create a much stronger threat of 27...e6, but after 27.h4 all Black would have achieved is to leave the entry square b7 unprotected.]

27.Nf6 Red8

[27...Re7 is simply wrong, because there would follow 28.Nh7+ Ke8 29.Nf6+ and the King must return to f8.]

28.h4

[Now 28.Nh7+ Kg8 29.Nf6+ Kh8 is worse than useless. At least, the King is more exposed to tactical counterchances on f8. Defending the Q is quite important, as will soon become clear.]

28...Qa8



[An impressive attacking retreat, it creates the nasty threat 29...Rc5 30.Qf4 Rf5. Kramnik cannot afford to sit by idly.]

29.c5

[The Challenger believes he must get rid of his primary weakness, but I am not at all sure this is necessary. 29.Qf4 would have maintained material equality, albeit at considerable discomfort. Still, White's counterpressure against the d-pawn is not to be underestimated.]

29...Rxc5

[Perhaps it was this specific move order that Kramnik had overlooked when he played 28.h4. After 29...dxc5 30.Rxc5 Bxf6 White escapes with the intermediate captures 31.Rxc8 Bxg5 32.Rxa8 , as 32...Rxa8 33.hxg5 justifies the advance of the h-pawn completely.]

30.Rxc5 Bxf6

[Of course, not 30...dxc5 as the capture 31.Qxc5+ comes with check.]

31.Qxf6 dxc5



[All of a sudden the World Champion has an extra passed P and visions of his title staying "at home" must dominate the thoughts of many heads. Both sides have active pieces and the only serious problem for Black is his somewhat exposed King, for example there is the idea Rb1-b6xe6,

regardless of whether the King stands on e8, f8 or g8.]

32.Kh2

[Naturally, not 32.Rb6 Rd1+ and mate next move. Removing the King from potential danger is very important in similar positions...]

32...Kg8

[...which is probably why Kasparov follows suit, but this is not necessarily good. Immediately after a transitional phase there comes another of reassessment and consolidation, in which a player must adapt to the new circumstances and order his priorities straight. Maybe this is why Kramnik provoked a sudden change in the position, since the player that provoked the transformation of the game is psychologically better prepared to switch to a new mental approach. Here Kasparov is on the receiving end, otherwise he would most certainly remember that his idol of earlier days Alekhine, who had specialized in battles between major pieces, always stressed activity before King safety.

The important thing here is to understand that a Q ending is technically (if not easily) winning for Black, because then the passed P can be escorted to the queening square unhindered. On the other hand, the result of a R ending will depend first and foremost on the specific position of the Rs.

What this means here is that the indicated approach for Black consists in first improving the position of the pieces, possibly advancing the P a little in order to provoke some retreat by the opponent, and only later playing it safe with the King. White can create serious counterchances if he can coordinate both his pieces, but never enough with only one of them. Therefore, 32...Qd5 is the correct approach, when the idea 33...Qd4 more or less forces White's hand. 33.Rb6 is then followed by 33...Ra8 (33...c4 34.Rxe6 Qxe6 35.Qxd8+ Kg7 36.Qd4+ Kh7 and 37...Qc6 might also offer winning chances, but is unnecessarily more complicated) 34.e3 (prevents 34...Qd4, while a typical variation is 34.Rxe6 Qxe6 35.Qh8+ Ke7 36.Qxa8 Qxe2 37.Qa7+ Kf6 38.Qxc5 Qxa2 39.Qd6+ Kg7 40.Qe5+ Kh7 etc.; and 34.e4 Qd4 35.e5 Kg8 36.Rb7 Rf8 should also lead eventually to a win for Black) 34...Kg8 (immediately 34...c4 is also possible, e.g. 35.e4 Qxe4 36.Rxe6 Qxe6 37.Qh8+ Ke7 38.Qxa8, but the King retreat looks safer now) and the plan of advancing the passed P with the support of both Q and R looks realistic now, for example 35.a4 c4 36.Qc3 Qf3 with the twin threat 37...Qxf2+ and 37...Rd8 with possibly ...Rd8-d1 to follow at the appropriate moment.]

[If Kasparov eventually loses the match, one critical factor might prove to be his relative weakness in the transitional phase between the middlegame and the ending. Games 2, 4 and 6 were particularly painful in that respect, even if in the end he managed to lose only the first among them: the others seem to have taken their toll in energy, an energy that was much needed in Games 7 and 13.]

33.Rb6

[Just in time to prevent the cooperation of Black's pieces with the passed

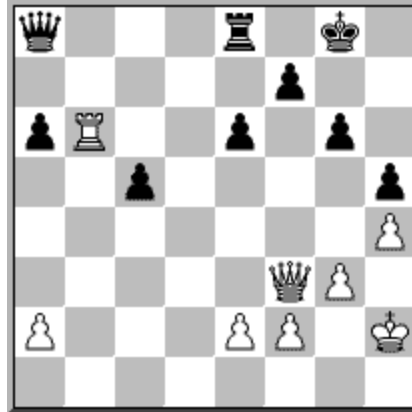
P.]

33...Re8

[Now 33...Qd5 proves useless after 34.Rxa6 c4 35.Ra7 , as 35...e5 36.Rxf7 is unplayable and 35...Rf8 36.Rc7 undesirable. However, now the R is too passive and White gets an extra opportunity.

By this time, Kramnik was down to 7 minutes and Kasparov to about 9.]

34.Qf3



[Theoretically and practically the best chance. If Black is allowed to consolidate, he will eventually repulse the enemy pieces and begin coordinating his own. Transposing to the R ending is Kramnik's ideal option, since his own R is active and can inflict maximum damage on the enemy queenside Ps.] 34...Qxf3 [Because of the threats 35.Rb7 and 35.Rc6, Kasparov has no real choice.]

35.exf3 Rc8

[Of course, not 35...a5 36.Rb5 (the trap 36.Rc6 Rb8 -or 36...Rd8- 37.Rxc5 Rb2 38.Rxa5 -theoretically superior is 38.Kg2, when White will suffer- 38...Rxf2+ is too transparent, even for zeitnot) 36...Rd8 37.Rxa5 with an immediate draw.]

36.Rxa6

[Material is equal again, but the black R is better posted and thus Kasparov will once more win a P. However, the situation has been greatly simplified...]

36...c4 37.Rd6

[Exactly the same position will occur after 37.Rb6 c3 etc.]

37...c3 38.Rd1 Ra8

[The immediate advance 38...c2 is completely silly, since after 39.Rc1 the P is going nowhere, so that the enemy King can simply approach and take it.]

39.Rc1 Rxa2 40.Rxc3

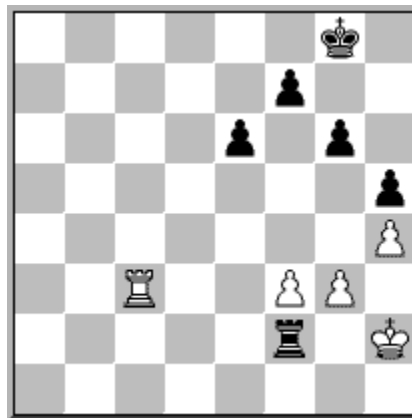
[The last move before the time control is often wrong, but here Kramnik correctly refrains from 40.Kg2 Ra3 (the immediate 40...c2 leads to exactly

the same position after 41.Kf1 Kg7 42.Ke2 Kf6 43.Kd2 g5) 41.Kf1 Kg7 42.Ke2 (42.Rc2 loses an important tempo and allows the much easier win 42...Kf6 43.Ke2 Kf5 44.Kd3 e5 45.Rxc3 -or 45.Ke3 Rb3 46.Kd3 Rb2 etc.- 45...Rxc3+ 46.Kxc3 e4 47.fxe4+ Kxe4 48.Kd2 Kf3 49.Ke1 f5 50.Kf1 f4 , when White will soon lose the h-pawn) 42...Kf6 43.Kd3 c2+ 44.Ke2 (a grave mistake would be 44.Kxc2 Rxf3 45.Rf1 Kf5 46.Kd2 Kg4 47.Ke2 e5 48.Ra1 e4 49.Ra4 f5 50.Ra6 Kh3 51.Rxg6 Kg2 etc.)

44...Ra2 45.Kd2 and now the simplest is 45...Kf5 , e.g. 46.Rxc2 Rxc2+ 47.Kxc2 f6 48.Kd3 g5 49.Ke3 gxh4 50.gxh4 e5 and the P ending is always lost because of the reserve tempo with the f-pawn: 51.f4 (equally hopeless is 51.Kd3 Kf4 52.Ke2 f5) 51...exf4+ 52.Kf3 Ke5 53.Ke2 Ke4 54.f3+ (or 54.Ke1 Kf3 55.Kf1 f5 56.Kg1 Ke2 57.Kg2 f3+ 58.Kg1 f4) 54...Kd4 55.Kd2 f5 etc.]

[Now "all is quiet in the western front" and the battle will be decided in the east.]

40...Rxf2+



[Perhaps luckily for the Challenger, he must make another important choice immediately after the time control. The best practical approach in such situations is to take a small break, relax physically from the tension and only then try to concentrate again.

The truth is that Kramnik should be able to draw the R ending with eyes closed, if he wants to become World Champion. One can only imagine Kasparov's frustration to have reached only this theoretical ending after such a magnificent effort in the middlegame, but life is really tough at moments like this. At least to one of the contestants...]

41.Kg1

[It might seem strange to allow Black the "absolute 7th rank", but the most important aspect of the position is to prevent the Black King from joining the attack. This means that the R must remain active and not become tied down to the defence of the f-pawn after 41.Kh3 .]

41...Ra2 42.Rc7 Kf8 43.Rb7 Ke8

[The only way to make progress is to advance the King, but then the Ps will be unprotected. Therefore, they have to advance too, but then some of them will be exchanged. All Kramnik needs to do is to take care that Kasparov does not create a passed e-pawn under favourable circumstances.]

44.Rb8+ Ke7 45.Rb7+ Kf6 46.Kf1

[I do not quite understand this. After 46.f4 Black cannot make progress without exchanging the e-pawn and therefore a draw should be easy, for example 46...Kf5 47.Rxf7+ Kg4 48.Rf6 and Black must agree to a draw.]

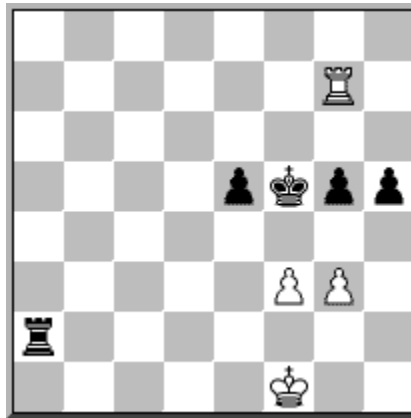
46...e5

[Now Kasparov has kept some tension in the position and can still hope...]

47.Rb6+ Kf5 48.Rb7 Ke6 49.Rb6+ Kf5 50.Rb7 f6

[At last, but it may not be enough...]

51.Rg7 g5 52.hxg5 fxg5



53.Rg8

[This typical move creates a much needed greater distance between the defending R and the attacking King, so that the latter cannot easily respond to checks with counterthreats to the R. Now the position is likely to be drawn, as Kasparov acknowledges with his next few moves.

A horrible mistake would be 53.Ke1 Rg2;

53.Kg1 allows Black to keep on fighting with 53...g4 , although even then with best defence (54.Rf7+) a draw is assured.]

53...g4

[There is no better way to attempt to make any progress. Even in the endgame, even for a World Champion, pawn breaks are the most fundamental way to improve one's position!] 54.Rf8+ Ke6 55.Re8+ Kf5 [It is clear that this leads nowhere, since the R can keep on checking. Much more sensible is 55...Kf6 , trying to squeeze the R in the narrow space of one of the e-, f- or g-files.

I do not know exactly what happens in that case and I do not have the time to analyse it (sorry, I have to go back to work!). Nevertheless, what I

cannot understand at all is why Kasparov did not even try this idea. He had nothing to lose and everything to gain!]]

56.Rf8+ Kg6 57.Rg8+ Kf5 ½-½

[Now that Kramnik only needs 1/2 a point from the remaining 2 games, the match is nearly over. It seems very unlikely that Kasparov will manage twice in consecutive attempts what he has not yet managed once over 14 tries. No matter how close he got today to his intermediate goal or how close he might still get if he wins on Thursday, the fact remains that Kramnik has proven too solid to lose 2 games in a row. Really, it seems much more probable that he will lose neither than that he will allow Kasparov to tie the match.

The Challenger's main goal in the next two days is to find the correct balance between too much tension and too much relaxation, now that he is close to his life dream. The Champion's prospects can stay alive only if he manages to mobilise his full reserves of energy, something he proved incapable of doing on Sunday. Still, both players must be getting very tired by now, a situation quite conducive to a higher rate of mistakes and thus unpredictability.

If the chess is not top level in the next two games, at least it is likely to be exciting. Some more agony around for everybody!]



Taken from: [CanalWeb](#)

**Kasparov,G (2849) - Kramnik,V (2770) [C67]
The Match - Braingames World Chess Cham London
(15), 02.11.2000**

[This last important game of the match I saw only after it had finished, so my comments are made under the influence of the result. Congratulations to the new World Champion and may both players offer us as beautiful games in the future as they have in the past!]

1.d4

[Finally, Kasparov decides to test the Challenger's preparation against his other major opening choice. Somehow I feel he should have tried this at least as early as game 11, if not earlier.]

1...Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3

[Allowing transposition to the Catalan Opening, an offer Kramnik does not

refuse.]

3...d5 4.Bg2 Be7 5.Nf3 0-0 6.O-O dxc4 7.Qc2

[Other important options include 7.Nc3 ; 7.Na3 and; 7.Ne5 . The Q move is at once the most popular and the one with the best practical results. It has the obvious negative aspect of activating the Q early in the game and thus making it potentially vulnerable to the enemy minor pieces, but it recovers the pawn swiftly without serious structural concessions and frees d1 for the R. The latter consideration is very important, because in this way White can inhibit the usually equalizing break ...c7-c5.]

7...a6

[This is Black's standard response, based primarily on the idea of developing the white-square B on the h1-a8 diagonal with the hope that the "Catalan" B will be completely neutralized.]

8.Qxc4

[White can also delay the capture of the pawn and prevent Black's queenside expansion with 8.a4 , albeit at the price of weakening b4. Kasparov prefers to follow more traditional lines, planning to work on the semi-open c-file.]

8...b5 9.Qc2 Bb7



10.Bd2

[Other option for the B are 10.Bg5 and; 10.Bf4 . From d2 it can be transferred to a5, pinning down the enemy c-pawn and thus prevent the freeing advance ...c7-c5 for a very long time.]

10...Be4

[The main line, with the idea of disturbing the cooperation of White's pieces. The Q has no real choice but to retreat to the first rank, from where it will have to move again in the future. Black cannot try to harass instead the B with 10...Ne4 , as then follows the typical tactical sequence 11.Ng5 Bxg5 12.Bxe4 etc.] 11.Qc1 Bb7 [In most games this would constitute an indirect draw offer, but of course the World Champion will have none of it. In case Black wants to play for a win, an important alternative is 11...Nbd7 12.Ba5

Rc8 .]

12.Bf4

[The immediate 12.Ba5 proves completely useless after 12...Nc6; , while the continuation 12.Rd1 Ne4 13.Ba5 Nc6 demonstrates once again why it is important to remove the Q from c2.]

12...Bd6



[Without a B on a5, 12...Nc6 is quite pointless. White can reply 13.Rd1 and continue with Nf3-e5 as soon as possible. In any case, the c-pawn will remain backward and Black at a distinct disadvantage as a result.]

13.Nbd2

[Much more sensible than 13.Nc3 , since the N can nw contribute to the control of the critical square c5. When the central pawn formation has more or less been determined, simple development can no longer be also simplistic. Long-term aspects of the position must be taken into account and space often takes precedence over time.]

13...Nbd7

[After 13...Bxf4 14.gxf4 White will dominate the black squares in the centre and still be able to challenge for the white ones, therefore the slight weakening of the pawn cover of the King is negligible.]

14.Nb3

[The N is not only preventing ...c7-c5, but in several instances may be heading towards a5. From that point it may even jump to c6, blocking the c-pawn for good and establishing full domination. Black must be extra careful to inhibit such a prospect before it becomes a reality.]

14...Bd5

[The B moves once again, but now the enemy N will not be attacking anything from a5. Therefore, the immediate 15.Na5 can be answered succesfully with 15...Bxf4 16.gxf4 c5.]

15.Rd1

[An important move in the Catalan Opening, creating a secret connection

with the enemy Q. This can become especially relevant in the case of either typical breakthrough ...c7-c5 or ...e6-e5.

Reportedly Kasparov had consumed by now a little more than 10 minutes, while Kramnik almost 50! For once, the opening appears to have gone favorably for the World Champion as White, at least from a subjective point of view. Nevertheless, a detached evaluation would limit Black's problems to the c-file. Kramnik has achieved a satisfactory degree of cooperation for his minor pieces and his major weapons are not really much worse than Kasparov's.]

15...Qe7

[Naturally, Black wishes to get away from any secret attack by the enemy R. At the same time, the Rs are connected and thus development is almost complete.

It should be noted that the exchange 15...Bxb3 is extremely inappropriate here, as the doubled b-pawns are not vulnerable at all. On the contrary, the white squares in Black's queenside sector would be severely weakened, in particular c6 and the a-pawn.]

16.Ne5

[This move signals the beginning of the real middlegame, as the two armies begin to make direct contact. Another attempt to prevent ...c7-c5 is 16.Qe3 .]

16...Bxg2

[The disappearance of the white-square Bs weakens emphasizes the importance of the square c6, while Kasparov's King is not likely to feel any serious danger.]

17.Kxg2 Nd5



[Kramnik cannot prevent the invasion on c6, since 17...Nxe5 is of course impossible because of 18.dxe5 , while; 17...Bxe5 18.dxe5 Nd5 19.Bg5 creates annoying problems (for example, 19...Qb4 20.Rd4 traps the Q). This means he will have to work around the N on c6, probably trying for the alternative freeing advance ...e6-e5.]

18.Nc6

[The central advance 18.e4 also looks attractive, but there is a way out for the defender: 18...Nxf4+ 19.Qxf4 (the capture 19.gxf4 may prove risky despite the massive pawn centre after 19...Bxe5 20.fxe5 because of the break 20...f6 21.exf6 Nxf6 22.f3 Nh5 etc.) 19...Bxe5 (Black should probably not bet on 19...f6 , as the tactical reply 20.Nc6 Bxf4 21.Nxe7+ Kf7 22.Nc6 leads to a problematic ending with serious winning chances for White; , while after 19...Nxe5 20.dxe5 Bc5 21.Nxc5 Qxc5 22.Rac1 serious trouble may also be in store) 20.dxe5 and now the unexpected advance 20...g5 practically forces the draw by 21.Rxd7 (instead 21.Qe3 Nxe5 is not really dangerous, except maybe to White) 21...Qxd7 22.Qxg5+ Kh8 23.Qf6+ Kg8 24.Qg5+ .]

18...Nxf4+

[Another apparently attractive choice is 18...Qf6 , but it can be answered simply with 19.e3 (but not 19.Bxd6 cxd6 20.e4 Ne7 , when White's advantage is minimal, e.g. 21.Nba5 Rfc8 22.Nxe7+ Qxe7 23.Qd2 Rc7 24.Rac1 Rac8 25.Rxc7 Rxc7 26.Rc1 Nf6 etc.) . If White was agreeable earlier to accept doubled f-pawns by recapturing from g3, there is absolutely no reason why control over e5 and c6 is not worth more than the isolation of d4 after 19...Nxf4+ (or 19...Bxf4) 20.exf4 .]

19.Qxf4

[Of course, not 19.gxf4 Qh4 20.e3 Qg4+ and Black should be in no danger of losing.]

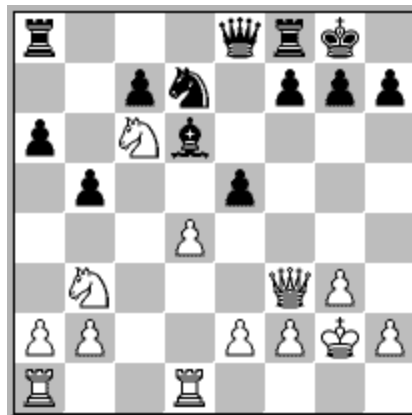
19...Qe8

[Likewise, Black will not be tempted by 19...Bxf4 20.Nxe7+ etc. The transaction executed in the last few moves has left White with two minor pieces that can control white squares, while Black has only one N and the black-squared B. The only way to avoid being suffocated is to achieve the breakthrough ...e6-e5, thus making something out of this B.]

20.Qf3

[20.Qe4 is no improvement, as in the game continuation the Q will be "hanging".]

20...e5



[On this small advance may hang the future of World Chess. Will the white squares that are exposed by it mean more than the increased activity of the black pieces?]

21.dxe5 Nxe5 22.Nxe5 Qxe5 23.Rd2 Rae8

[I am not quite sure about this move, since now the queenside is completely deserted. It was not possible to play 23...c5 24.Rd5 Qe7 25.Rad1 Rad8 , as the unexpected 26.Qe3 wins a P for White. It is true that there will be too many doubled Ps after 26...Qxe3 27.fxe3 c4 28.Rxd6 Rxd6 29.Rxd6 cxb3 30.axb3 but the more active King and R promise good winning chances as long as there are Ps on both sides of the board.;

On the other hand, maybe 23...a5 was better, mobilising the queenside P majority with reasonable piece support. Now Kasparov has an unexpected opportunity to stir up some trouble.]

24.e3

[Another move I do not quite understand. Kasparov seems content to treat the position in a detached manner, without creating any direct threats. It seems to me that the more aggressive 24.a4 was indicated, e.g. 24...Qe4 25.axb5 axb5 26.Nd4 and White begins to make some headway.

Apparently, at this point both players had a little over half an hour left.]

24...Re6 [A sensible choice, preparing the development of its fellow R and providing some indirect support to the potentially weak a-pawn.]

25.Rad1

[Now it too late for 25.a4 , as the capture 25...bxa4 cannot be met by the simple recapture 26.Rxa4 (objectively better is 26.Nd4 , although after 26...Rf6 and a subsequent ...a4-a3 Black is doing O.K.) : the e-pawn has removed the protection of the Nb3 and 26...Qb5 is very possible.]

25...Rf6 26.Qd5

[Just for variety's sake, Kasparov offers an exchange of Qs! Naturally, Kramnik refuses the proposal.]

26...Qe8

[After 26...Qxd5+ 27.Rxd5 the white squares are as weak as ever and the c-pawn as backward as it could possibly be. The queenside P majority is useless when White controls the d-file, while the N is obviously superior to the B. In addition, the above details mean that White's King can be activated much more easily than his black colleague.

The Q wisely retreats to a point from where it provides some protection to the critical square c6.]

27.Rc1

[A clear signal that Kasparov has evil intentions against c6 and consequently the enemy queenside Ps.]



27...g6

[The fact that Kramnik finds nothing better means his other R will remain passive for some time. The World Champion must strike before it is too late.

Still, the advantages of the P advance should not be underestimated, most notably the idea of providing f5 to the R.]

28.Rdc2

[Since 28.Rc6 is not possible because of 28...Rf5, Kasparov decides to double Rs on the c-file. This means that he deserts the all-important d-file that lies between the P majorities and is the prime consideration in such situations.;

28.Nd4 c5 was worse than useless, but maybe; 28.Nc5 should have been tried, e.g. 28...Rf5 29.Qd4 Qa8+ 30.Kg1 and White keeps control of the most important lines. The twin threats 31.Nd7 and 31.Ne4 are not to be underestimated, while the exchange of minor pieces does not relieve the pressure.]

28...h5

[Another good practical choice, trying to soften up White's pawn structure on the kingside: either Black will play ...h5-h4 at some appropriate point or White will advance h2-h4 and weaken g3 on his own.]

29.Nd2

[Kasparov wants to use the N to harass the B that holds Black's position together, but I also like 29.h4, e.g. 29...Rf5 (of course, not 29...Qe5 30.Qxe5 Bxe5 31.f4 Bd6 32.Rc6 etc.) 30.Qc6 and the N will be reactivated with gain of time.]

29...Rf5

[Kramnik's attempts to fight for control of the centre are bound to fail in the long run, as long as the second R remains incarcerated on f8.]ž 30.Qe4 [Completely incomprehensible, even if Kasparov was in serious time trouble by now. After 30.Qc6 White keeps some serious pressure, while now...]

30...c5

[Kasparov must have been so taken in by his intention to exchange Qs that

he forgot this advance was now possible. As a result, his doubling on the c-file looks very silly and his positional advantage gone down the drain. How can a World Champion play a move that contradicts his plan for the last 20 moves?]

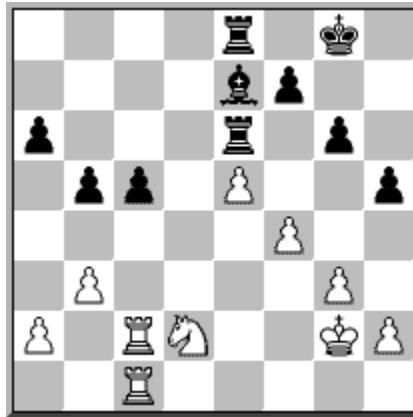
31.Qxe8

[There is nothing better, but by now Kramnik must have felt elated.]

31...Rxe8 32.e4

[A last attempt, but one doomed to fail without control of the d-file.]

32...Rfe5 33.f4 R5e6 34.e5 Be7 35.b3



[Perhaps Kasparov's calculations were based on the threat 36.Ne4, but unfortunately it is Black's move...]

35...f6

[Now that the spearhead P disappears from the board, the final outcome should not be in doubt: Kramni will soon become World Champion!]

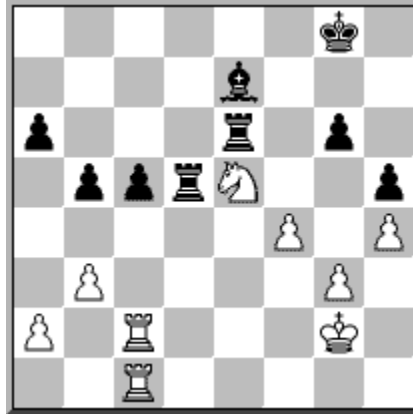
36.Nf3

[Or 36.exf6 Bxf6 and the c-pawn remains immune (37.Rxc5 Re2+).]

36...fxe5 37.Nxe5 Rd8

[Suddenly the d-file belongs to Black. The rest is silence.]

38.h4 Rd5



[In this position Kasparov gave up his attempts to win. According to eyewitness reports, Kramnik punched the air with both fists in celebration of this momentous event, even if the whole game seems something of an anti-climax. In the last few games the younger player seemed very tired and was in danger repeatedly, but his opponent could not muster the energy to take advantage of his opportunities. The 16th and final game is supposed to be played on Saturday, but I do not think anyone will be surprised if it is another lifeless draw.

NOTE: These comments were completed a little before 3:00a.m. (Greek time), on Friday, November 3rd, 2000. Please send your comments on my efforts. All criticism and improvements are greatly appreciated!] $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$